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OLD ANDY



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BY
DOROTHEA CONYERS

TORONTO
BELL & COCKBURN

PR 6005

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1914

OLD ANDY

CHAPTER I

'S HE has her courage losht." Danny Hehir contemplated a large red cow admiringly. "Losht, I tell ye. The red cow did but make a kick at her lasht night, an' Honora lit up the field flightin' like a greyhound."

Andrew Quin bit his pipe stem thoughtfully. Silhouetted against an amber sky, he could see the Honora referred to, and the possibility of her carrying her seventeen stone over the pasture at greyhound-like speed would not have occurred to him. Andy's eyes twinkled softly, but he said nothing.

"God be with the days when she'd give a cow as good as she got," said Danny, "and not with 'Here! lay a hand on her, Danny. Scald to ye, Danny: will ye hould her!' An' spancils here an' spancils there, till the patience is wore on us; up an' down, with her leppin' like a fairy."

Again old Andy's eyes sought the back view of the distant figure.

"Milk the red cow yourself, Danny," he suggested.

The herdsman returned hotly that he could see the use of two clanin' their hands whin one'd do. "Honora's there do be just out of pickle, she's that

tasty. There'd be an extry sthونه of salt, Mr. Andy, if meself tuk to it."

At this point Mrs. Madden detached herself from the tub where she was making her hands scrupulously clean, and rolled down across the field.

The softness of an autumn evening lay round Ballinmena. Amber and pink lighted the west, tinting the edges of the clouds. The squat, slated house crouched peacefully in front of its rambling yard; the hay-barns were full of hay; ricks of straw reared carefully thatched noses; Andy's colts strayed in the paddock close to the front door. A clean smell of peat blew across from the bog to the west, and beyond it rose a range of hills, mistily mysteriously grey and indigo.

All round stretched grass lands—a fox-hunter's paradise—fenced by sound banks of loose grey walls. Getting up on the bank close to where the cows stood, one could see the fox covert of Ballinmena—a rambling patch of gorse, hemmed about with poor, boggy land, and Andy's sacred charge.

"I seen two foxes goin' in but an hour ago." Danny changed the subject. "Two, an' one as big as the dun calf in the three acres. The dogs'll be apt to find them to-morrow."

"With me two grey chickens that would be layin' afther the new year safe an' warm inside of them," Mrs. Madden made wrathful interruption, "an' himself here tindin' an' mindin' the thievin' vilyins as if they were his childther, no less. Oh, 'tis well to be grinnin' now, Mister Andy, but 'twill be 'Honora, why haven't ye eggs?' when the winther comes, and thim foxes with all the gran' eggs for themselves." Here Mrs. Madden observed that she'd fox them

same for foxes, and bade Danny bring up the spotty cow. "Ye might be seein' to sellin' this red wan," she added briskly. "She is a rogue."

The white streams flew from her skilful red hands, coming rhythmically into the pail, with the spotty cow standing in pleased patience.

"Isn't she a good milker now, Honora, that red one?" inquired Andy, gravely, with the twinkle he found it so hard to suppress in his grey eyes.

Mrs. Madden returned, sarcastically, that she was good milkin' enough for the daisies. "There not bein' two days on the week that she doesn't upset every drop of the blessed milk onto the field, an' meself along with it. She can make a drive at ye with a spencil the same as she'd be free," said Honora dramatically. "An' she'll watch down like a Christian till she sees the froth on the pail, an' thin over it goes, as Danny here can bear me out."

"Danny says you are afraid of her," said Andy, mildly.

Danny, deftly fastening a spencil, turned a reproachful eye upon his master.

The milk rushed into the pail until Honora was free to rise and dare Danny Hehir to give her the lie, an' to offer to milk the red cow without a thing on her, if Mister Andy was wishful to see it done.

Here she seized a pail, at which the red cow immediately kicked with skilful precision, and then, lowering her head, made some doubtful movements with her horns in her owner's direction.

"The biggest schamer," Mrs. Madden announced, "that'll never know her place till she's roast beef on a table, and then maybe she might wish she'd had manners."

OLD ANDY

Andy coughed softly. He duly promised to sell the red cow to someone—it did not do to vex Honora—and he strolled away. It had been a good year at Ballinmena; his wrinkled face was thoughtfully happy. The big barn was full; the oats had never been so heavy. The poor, rush-grown fields he had taken up were gradually growing into better land. Andy, his father, had taken without ever giving; Andy, the son, had come into a heritage of rotting roofs, tumbling outhouses; of sour, undrained lands.

Andy leant his arms on a gate, looking down at the Court. How many good hunts he had ridden from there, would ride again, old as he was. Few men could handle a youngster as old Andy could; coax a nervous one, steady a rusher. He always had a few, and bought a few, and made them pay in lucky years.

There would be something substantial this year to add to that deposit account which was growing at the bank. Andy's eyes looked wistfully at the green fields, lighted up by the last rays of the sun. The sun was going where he wanted to go, where his heart lay buried.

Tragedy had spread her wings over Andy's life. His wife and only son had gone to Australia, asked there for a six months' trip to see his wife's sister, and for her health the doctor had ordered a sea trip. The boy had been Andy's idol, the quiet wife had left a good home to come to Ballinmena; but death out there had claimed them.

The letter which had broken his heart scarcely held together now, so often had it been read.

"And Katey's last wish was that you'd come and stand by where she sleeps here, and put your own

stone to her ; but knowing you are poor, we have seen to it now, and you can do it later on."

They knew that he was poor, that Katey had left riches to come to him. The Martins were big people. Andy's old eyes were dim, as he looked out. If Peter, the son, was there now he would be looking over the horses and the next day's hunt, singing about the yard, ordering and directing, a young master.

From the hour when he got that letter Andy meant to go to stand by the graves out near busy Melbourne, to put a marble monument instead of the simple white headstones. But it would cost money. He wanted to see every place which they had seen. He wanted to go and come comfortably, so that the sister out there should not be ashamed of the man Katey had married. And it had taken time to save the money. Something was always wanting to be repaired ; the interest on loans to be paid. Andy's farm was a trust to him to go on to his brother's son Andy, who would come from Ash to it when Andy went. He toiled on with his goal ahead, until the relations in Australia quite ceased to expect him.

"When I have five hundred I will go," said Andy to himself, "for there will be the passage, cutting into a hundred ; and the horses idle, and I away, and the monument beyond that's to be eighty or more ; and I would not be there poor." Across the calming sea of grief he had learnt to dream of his trip, of all he would see upon the way, the strange towns and people ; the blue seas, the silver nights of the far-away world ; and the quiet place where Katey and Peter lay waiting for him.

"In the spring," Andy said, "next spring. I would not like the grate hate beyond there. It will

be for next spring. And if I do not go soon I might miss it, and they never would believe I meant to go, but that it was all talk." Sundry curious knocks against his left side gave him warning that life does not go on for ever.

"But in this spring," he repeated. "Ah! is it you, Creina?"

A girl ran to meet him, a cloud of red-brown hair loose in the dying sunlight; a well set-up girl, with shy, sweet eyes, set in a face tanned golden brown. Creina Casey had the bane of wit and soul behind her dark eyes; the power to suffer which they held so firmly by their hands.

"Ah, Uncle Andy," she ran up to him. "And I lookin' the covert below for you, watchin' for you to carry down the crows."

"Did you disturb the foxes?" said Andy severely. "I forgot the crows, Creina, an' two shot an' all."

"Mat has the burrows closed." Creina climbed on to the gate, swinging on it. "An' I saw two foxes, no less, that peeped out a went in again."

Here Andy remarked, "Oh, Mat O'Neill was closing the burrow, was he?" in a dry tone, and the sun appeared to have come again and be reflected in Creina's face.

"You may put that away out of your head, Creina," he said kindly. "Mat won't do—your father's daughter! An' what came to your hair?"

"The furry bushes knocked it an' I crawlin' in," Creina remarked, unabashed. "I was wishful to see the burrow, Uncle Andy, an' so I followed Mat on."

"God save you for girls!" said Andy patiently.

Creina, with extreme skill, hairpinned up her hair with the aid of two hairpins.

"I will be fetchin' the milk now," she said.

"Milk is it?" said Andy.

"The pail got upset on me," said Creina, her face blankly innocent, "so I said I'd run across a borry a couple of quarts. Oh! the red cow has Honora Madden over again."

Spuncilled and guarded, that malignant bovine had just succeeded in again upsetting both milk and milker, to the accompaniment of shrill wails of anger.

"There isn't a doubt in it but she has an ill wish against Honora," said Andy mildly. "She watches for her, clever as a Christian."

He walked slowly towards his house, Creina by his side.

Creina had come to be Andy's comfort when trouble was blackly with him. She was always about the place, trying to end her life by driving the mowing and tossing machines, upsetting his best cocks of hay, riding off his pony when it was wanted immediately; opening the oven door to put in weird cakes of her own making, and thereby causing a "gran' loaf of bread to sit down as flat as if ye rowled on it."

Peppery little Mrs. Cafferty, Andy's housekeeper, made enduring complaint vainly. Creina was privileged.

Creina finished the adjusting of her hair, and sighed. "Isn't it the pity now?" she said slowly.

Andy knew that the end of the sentence, coupled with a longing look at his house, meant that it was a great pity Mat O'Neill was not the owner of a similar house.

"Is it hurt you are, Honora?" Creina asked sympathetically.

Honora replied testily that if she was not it was

the way the grass was soft, and not due to the red cow, "the scaled to her likes an' breed," as she walked off huffily to her spotless dairy.

"Nice work on Friday when the butther's short," she remarked, over her shoulder, "an' the customers bawlin' for it around the town. I a's the cow to kape, Misther Andy; she's betther than Bassic Schag."

"I'd like to be afther a dairy," said Creina, looking in at the pans of sweet yellow cream, the tubs of sour waiting for Friday's churning—Andy scorned separators and their extra yield.

The yard gave squelchily deep in old chaff and rubbish under their feet, and they came to the front door where old Patrick, Andy's decrepit uncle, kept four flower beds and strove yearly to win prizes at the local shows. He was delving away now, puffing and panting as he toiled.

The windows of the front rooms were, of course, tightly closed, but the green hall door stood open.

Patrick bestowed several ill-wishes on Creina's red cur dog as he proceeded to plant stunted wallflowers carefully.

Geraniums, which were rather like Octopius, grew faintly in the little porch, their wild arms bearing stunted flowers at the extreme tips. Patrick would never "be afther cutting thim down."

"An' I 'se they'll look afther it all next summer," Andy said nervously. "For there's ne'er a man ye can really trust when 't isn't their own."

"Ye are goin' then?" Creina asked, her eyes widening.

"With the spring, girsha. Away across the waters to see Katey's grave. I have the money saved at last,

Creina, an' a bit to keep the place goin', but it tuk time—it tuk time—a long time—till I was ready."

Creina looked doubtful. She was approaching a crisis in her life, and she would miss her kindly old friend.

"God save they won't be makin' it up with Timsy Henessy an' me, an' ye away," she said nervously.

"But he has a fine warm place, Creina."

"An' a fine black heart," responded Creina briskly, "as one or two could be tellin', Mr. Andy. An' a fine wide throat for the whisky, an' other things. Nice ways for me to be lookin' for all the grey heads in the countryside to milk the cows."

Andy coughed discreetly. Timsy's heart was over-soft.

"There's Father Con crossin' the fields," he said, "an' the very walk of him has the hope of a hunt in it."

Father Con was short and slim and red-headed. He came of a sporting race which had kept horses for generations, and he loved a hunt above all things earthly. The upkeep of a good youngster was an ever-present difficulty, and especially when the manner of its riding to hounds was more conducive to profit than the horse's future value; but Father Con managed it somehow.

"The leg is off his horse," said Andy. "He did it over the barbed wire on Friday, an' we all shoutin' to stop him. Good evenin', Father."

"Good evening, Mr. Andy." Father Con's blue eyes beamed with ingratiating friendliness. "I called over to see if the foxes was about for to-morrow."

"Honor'd tell you they are," said Andy gravely, "an' she countin' the fowl to-night."

Father Con directed his conversation round several

points before he made his glide to his destination. He praised the weather, and the cows, and the harvest, and when he was offered tea, he asked to see the horses first.

"I had an argument with Ned Deveen that says your bay horse is but fifteen two, and I have it laid he is sixteen hands."

Andy led the way to the stables, the twinkle bright in his eyes. Here horses poked their heads from a range of loose boxes. The hunters and valuable youngsters were airily and warmly housed.

From their quarters a sliding scale of outhouses led from the boxes to a variety of sheds, down to the species of hole under a roof where the Iceland pony breathed in semi-darkness.

Father Con chose a bay nose with a white blaze down it, and went into a stable where a raking, half-clipped colt was chewing hay with a determined appetite.

Father Con's eyes looked greedily at the awkward, lengthy four-year-old; at the strong back, the great, galloping thighs, the coarseness of outline which a well-bred one loses as he grows into years.

"There's for you," said Father Con, with a whistling gasp of admiration, "and a great lepper. I saw him in the ropes. Ye couldn't knock him."

Andy said drily that he thought a good deal at present depended on the strength of the walls.

"For it's through them he goes when he wouldn't flight over them like a pheasant," he said. "But he should be a great horse, some day."

"A cub hunt," said Father Con, "would be advantageous for him now. To give him an insight before there was real work, Mr. Andy."

Andy said nothing ; his eyes went on twinkling.

As Father Con came reluctantly to the door, Andy paused. "And you've quite forgotten to measure him, Father," he said mildly.

Father Con, with a poppy-like rush of colour, immediately rushed back to lay his chin knowingly against the colt's wither, and pronounce him "sixteen strong" without hesitation.

He passed on to the next stable. Here a stout grey cob chumped lazily, with blinking eyes, and his master observed fretfully that his likes would put up the price of whips.

"Up to seventeen stone, an' a galloper, but with no likin' for a lip. If yer own horse was laid up now, Father, any day, you could try this one."

Father Con had passed out hurriedly, without appearing to hear, and reached Andy's own horse, a varminty, flea-bitten grey, with round callowed forelegs and curby hocks, and perhaps the best hunter in all Cahervally.

A chestnut mare, light and well bred, with a nervous eye, was next seen : she had never been jumped. Two others, both likely to make hunters ; Andy admiring them all, appraising every good point, watching them as every true lover of horses watches each new one he buys.

He was showing Creina that the black in the corner had the finest forelegs in Ireland, when he observed Father Con back at the bay colt's box, peering in with his shoulders humped wistfully.

"Would you advise carbolic oil now, or boric powder, for the cut me own horse has got?" said Father Con over his shoulder. "He will not be out for ten days, an' I must miss to-morrow's hunt."

Andy gave up with a grin.

"And you came to get the loan of the bay colt," he said cheerfully, "and you might as well have asked straight out, Father, knowing I wouldn't refuse you. Shove him along at banks, but be easy at the walls; the cattle strays through the fields yet, and he has a plan of his own for makin' gaps."

An expression as of sunshine following clouds spread over Father Con's freckled face.

"One wouldn't like to be askin' straight away," he said modestly. "I wouldn't say now that if I choosed out a good hard sort of wall 'twouldn't learn him."

Andy objected hurriedly to hard walls.

"But the funeral," he said suddenly. "Isn't poor Katie Dundon to be buried to-morrow?"

Father Con replied that she was, but not too airily. "I was after tellin' them not to be hurryin' her out," he said gravely; "the ways the neighbours would be talkin'. I remembered the cub hunt, an' they talkin' of nine o'clock."

Andy led the way into the house; the front parlour gave forth a stuffy odour of long-lost fresh air. It was furnished with some heavy old-fashioned chairs and tables; a row of decanters stood on a small mahogany sideboard, and a sofa of an unrestful appearance stood against the wall.

Company took tea there, but Father Con was taken to a small room redolent of tobacco smoke, which opened into the kitchen. Mrs. Cafferty was out with Honora putting up the hens for the night. Creina, used to the house, prepared tea.

"There's eggs," she said gleefully, "I'll fry them. An' there's a cake in the oven. Don't tell on me if I takes it hot, mind now."

When Mrs. Cafferty, tightly swathed in a check shawl which gave her thin little figure the look of a bolster with all the feathers out, came in, Father Con was putting large lumps of butter on smoking and half-baked soda bread, and eating the spread-out eggs of Creina's frying with healthy appetite.

"I med the tea for them," said Creina, coming out with the tray; her red terrier had just gone off with the rest of the hot bread. "They are at the pipes now. Will I wash up for ye, Anne?"

Mrs. Cafferty was graciously pleased to accept help. As she scoured pots assiduously she bade Creina take the loaf from the oven.

Creina opened the oven door with a look of liquid innocence.

"There is no cake within," she announced carelessly. "Maybe it was to forget it ye did."

Mrs. Cafferty, unsuspecting, looked herself, and said a heated prayer. If the head was to be whipped from her on the minnit the lasht words her tongue spoke was that she put a cake in to bake. The chimbley . . . it could not go up the chimbley. "Will you have sense, Creina Casey? The head is goin' on me entirely from all that's to be done here. Honora Madden!" Mrs. Cafferty shrieked from the door, "was there dough on me hands an' I gone out to the fowl house?"

Mrs. Madden, rolling in to tea, replied that she could not be after recollecting, but she'd say there was not.

At this point Mrs. Cafferty banged open the door from the kitchen, and requested Father Con to pray for her failing memory. "Since that I was half an hour at it, an' thin never did it at all," wailed Anne

Cafferty sadly, "the cake that was for breakfast. But where is the dough—?"

Father Con, from the next room, said pleasantly that 'twas onpleasant to be forgettin' things, and that he'd make it his business to say a special prayer.

"The next thing," said Mrs. Cafferty wrathfully, "I'll forget where the six prize eggs that Danny's aunt sint me are—six from Lady Trehern's white fowls."

Creina did something hurriedly at the dresser, and Mrs. Cafferty found the six eggs where she had left them. When, later, there were five chickens of no known breed, Mrs. Cafferty and Lady Trehern's fowl woman were no longer on speaking terms.

"There's new people above at Fenessy's," said Father Con suddenly. "A young gentleman, Captain Deane, and his wife—to be there for the winter—and her sister. They was out ridin' to-day, the two of them. Fenessy's boy tells me one of the ladies is no use to ride. They're buyin' horses though."

"Fenessy'll match them," said Andy drily.

"If they'd give me eighty," said Father Con, "I'd part with me own black. I'd be left on the ground, but I'd oblige a stranger all the time. Ye couldn't stop him, an' if he does leave a leg he'll have it after the others before ye could miss it. An' for pace, his grandam won a race here."

"When all the other fell," said Andy thoughtfully.

"You would be afraid of ridin' over the dogs whin he is at his best," said Father Con, ignoring the interruption; "so if they comes to you, Andy, I'd sell to give a good impression of the county to them. If they buy Fenessy's bay, they might as well put on walkin' boots in the mornin's. I declare, Creina, that cake ye

stole is on me chest a-yet, an' poor Anne blighted lookin' for it."

Father Con promised to be over at six. Creina went off with her milk, her way taking her past the covert where a peculiarly jealous young covert keeper was looking for fresh holes to stop.

Andy sat smoking quietly, waiting for his old uncle to come in to his tea.

The voices of Mrs. Cafferty and Mrs. Madden rose loudly in the kitchen.

"If it was the firsht time I was forgetful, but I am gettin' afeard of it, Honora. Did I walk down to Stalley's lasht Saturday for two pennorth of elastic, an' when Jimsy Dundon sthopped me to say his mother was taken with a sthrong wakeness, an' like to go, didn't I find meself at home here afterwards with two cards of black tape? I could swear to Hevins above me I was makin' bread whin Cre a Casey ran into the kitchen; see the pan over there yet."

A fat puppy, walking with the drunken dignity peculiar to puppydom, made his way into the kitchen, gnawing something which he brought across to Mrs. Madden's chair. He avoided Mrs. Cafferty with the sagacity of his race.

"Ye dirty little craythur," said Mrs. Madden fiercely, stroking the small red head. "What are ye shokin' with?" She removed the pup's food from the grip of his needle-like teeth.

"A bit of a crust, an' it's warm," said Mrs. Madden.

"I declare to the Hevins above me," cried Anne, "that Spinsther, his mother, opened the oven door on me an' tuk out the cake for them wasthrels ov pups. Praises be! I had me memory afther all. Misther

Andy," she cried, "Spinster tuk the cake out of the oven on me. Will ye bate him for it? for I cannot sthand her ways."

"I will not," said Andy gravely.

"There's for ye," said Anne. "Do not be pettin' that pup, Honora. I'll kill ye, Spinster!"

Spinster sat down to nurse her puppy, with an air of complete trust in life and Anne Cafferty.

CHAPTER II

C RISP chill in a clear morning ; grey sprites of the vanished night still lurking in the shadows, hiding from the new-born day. Dew thick upon leaf and grass, with silver tracery of cobweb tangling through it. A pessimist might have muttered at the clear amber and blue and opal of the sky ; have hinted at the moan of the tiny wind which shook the branches ; at the lying clouds lying waiting in the west. Irish people are invariably optimists as to weather when there is anything to be done. As Mike and Pattie used brush and wisp in the dimness—Mrs. Cafferty would not allow the "good ile" to be wasted in the light of day—they remarked cheerily that 'twas the grandest morning iver ye see, an' that the horses'd be terrible lightsome an' they going off.

"Father Con has a mount got on the bay colt," Mike announced as he mixed the feeds, crushed oats and bran and chopped hay : Andy was up to date in his methods of feeding.

To which Pattie replied a little gloomily that Cafferty beyant the covert was not too well plazed to be raisin' walls, and shook his head thoughtfully.

"Ye'd think himself had a sphite agin sthones," he said, "an' he the natest banker ever laid an iron to one ; but walls. . . . God save ye ! ye can clout him or ye can coax him, an' he lays thim level the same ways. . . . I have, sir, I have thim all fed."

This in answer to a call from Andy.

No lack of work at Ballinmena once daylight came. Danny at work with his calves : Mrs. Madden looming monstrous-like in the uncertain light, with a variety of garments pinned about her ; stamping about the dairy and finally issuing with scalded and pickled hands to go down to the cows. The stables, from the boxes to the Iceland's dungeon, being opened as the horses were fed. Mrs. Cafferty, completely lost in her collection of early morning garments, moved peevishly in the kitchen, abusing everyone who let in thin streams of draughts as they opened and shut the doors. No windows were flung wide to the morning ; neither Andy nor his servants believed in fresh air in the house.

At half-past five Father Con, in leggings and breeches, came hurrying through the yard.

"Afraid of his life," he said, "that he had slept it out. For he had the clocks put on, an' Father Dennehy had thim put on too, to get the old woman up, so it was cruel hard to be subtractin' an' remember how much to take away.

Mrs. Cafferty's idea of a bit to eat was ready ; it consisted of a large mound of fried bacon, eight boiled eggs, a cold pig's head, sausages, and a hot soda loaf.

"It bein' too airly for breakfast," explained Mrs. Cafferty, throwing off two check shawls outside the door out of respect for the church, and wiping her face with her apron, "I brought yerself and Mr. Andy just a bite, Father."

"That he should not be thinkin' there is a stint here," she confided to Mrs. Madden.

Father Con tackled eggs and bacon with the healthy appetite of youth. He wondered would they have a

great run or only kill the pups. He ate with feverish haste and one anxious eye on the clock, for the meet was for six.

At ten minutes to, they went into the yard. Andy's old flea-bitten grey stood with pricked ears, sniffing the morning air, his heart hoping for hounds and hunting. The bay colt walked out with a sleepy roll and an evident disinclination to exercise at so early an hour.

"But I would not trust him, Father," said Pattie, "the way he looks, not bein' what he has in his mind, the schamer!"

Father Con clamped his knees a little tighter, the big breaking bit in the bay's mouth did not look as if it would stop a buckjump. Pattie reft a brown three-year-old, shaggy and wild eyed, from another stable. Mike got on the grey weight carrier, and they walked across the littered yard; the old grey on his toes, all fire and eagerness, the bay rolling behind him awkwardly, the brown and the cob sidling in complete uncertainty.

Hounds were coming down the lane to the covert, the pink coats splashes of brightness in the still uncertain light, a little crowd of followers, straw-hatted, covert-coated, jogging behind.

The old grey snorted from sheer delight, then compassed a gentle buckjump. As if decision no longer lay with them the three youngsters behind him woke and hurled themselves from the earth in various attitudes.

Father Con's bay crossed the space between him and hounds in three appalling plunges; the cob thought that he might be able to break his girths, and the chestnut kicked vigorously.

"And he pretending to be asleep when I got on him," said Father Con breathlessly, pulling up just clear of the pack. "You can't be up to a deceiver in horse or man."

Derrick Knox Harding observed with cheerful politeness that he'd rather Father Con's bay was up close to deceivers than his hounds.

"But he's a fine horse, Father," he added, "a fine horse. Foxes here, Andy?"

"Three pups and the old ones." Andy came jogging up. Age slipped from him when he got onto a horse. He was part of his mount, his lean body swaying to the movements of his horse, his knees gripping lightly but closely. A quiet little man in a slow hunt, probably the last through the gaps, or out away by himself well clear of hounds, but watching—always watching—and when they ran the old man on his grey would come out right or left, and those who followed him missed few gallops.

The gorse stretched brightly green, lying low and sheltered between the boggy lands; the hush of morning was in the air.

Two fields away Honora Madden was being kicked at by the red cow, and close to a thick hedge Creina Casey crouched watching, guiltily aware that she ought to be at home looking after the dairy; by her side her Mat O'Neill, a tall young fellow with bright blue eyes and an intelligent face.

"The covert keeper?" Derrick Harding looked round.

"He should be about there," said Andy drily, pointing to where Creina imagined she was concealed behind some festoons of colouring bramble leaves. Mat immediately appeared.

The old hounds had dashed in, followed by interested but inexperienced puppies, who were not well pleased with gorse prickles.

"Is he at home, Mat?" Derrick asked.

"There is one gone out after Delaney's geese," Mat whispered; "the vixen I'd say; but the four pups is inside."

Motionless spots of scarlet at the further end of the gorse, looking far away in the greyness; the crackle of the parting bushes as hounds pushed their way through, with glimpses of pied heads and waving sterns.

The chatter of conversation ebbed and flowed behind the Master.

"He is a nice colt, surely," Father Con had watchful hands firm on the bay's bridle, "an' well bred. I was passin' Ballinmena but yesterday, luckily for Andy, for he got me to bring this boy out to-day to have a smell of the hunt."

Andy coughed softly, close behind, but his eyes twinkled; he was fond of Father Con.

"Me own black bein' so venturesome, he cut himself," explained Father Con, "flingin' himself at the fences instead of goin' nice an' easy, but even if he were well I'd oblige Mr. Quin."

Andy coughed again, less softly; with a faint flush masking his freckles Father Con moved off.

"They're a long time findin', aren't they?" another voice asked.

"Big place, y'know."

"Isn't it lovely, Oliver? Oh, I do so wish I knew how to jump across the country."

A girl's voice softly clear. Andy looked round.

The three strangers from Fenessy's were out. Captain Deane on a showy grey with a faint middle

and bad shoulders ; his wife, in bridal newness as to her habit, on a pied chestnut with bad spavins ; and Kitty Adair, her sister, riding astride on a bay pony with an intelligently sulky eye.

"As you know nothing about it, Kit, you must not try," the voice of the elder and married sister reproved in tones of dignity.

A shrill yap from the gorse—another—taken up by half a dozen throats ; the deeper notes of older hounds, and the chorus of the dog pack crashed across the morning.

A startled cub, very much offended by this invasion of his sanctuary, jumped on to the overgrown bank of the gorse, saw the crowd of people, and dropped back again. A cap in air at the far end showed that two were on foot.

"There is four," said Mat, answering a question ; "an' himself, the ould wan."

It was too warm a home now for inexperienced cubs. One broke, scuttling up the marshy field, making for a patch of thick briars close to Andy's house, where he waited for mamma when she fetched him Andy's chickens.

But as the horn twanged its jubilant "Gone away," a shrill echoing yell came from the west of the gorse, and the pack burst out there hot on another fox.

"He's away, sir—an old one."

Papa flashing off gallantly to save his family, or . . . merely going off to make his own escape and leave fools to be chopped—who might say ?

There was scent enough on the wet pasture. A second's pause and they had it, old Ravager leading, the puppies throwing their tongues in delirious joy.

The little field dashed at a low stone wall with a

deep drop outside. Andy's grey, Whiteboy, slipping over it easily and lightly, his ears up, fighting for his bit to get nearer hounds. With his hocks under him, striding up the field, one realized that cock tail and hogged mane were mere cloaks for breeding. It took something very smart to catch Whiteboy when he was shaken up. Unfit—fat—he forgot his shortness of breath in the joy of flinging the fields behind him. Old man and old horse—neither conscious of lost youth now.

Captain Deane's lumpy grey landing with the heavy scramble of bad shoulders ; and Father Con, with the bay quite out of control, hit him hard to complete his confusion, and upset Captain Deane, who was in front of him.

"I declare I am exceedingly regretful," said Father Con over his shoulder, to a wrathful man subsiding into his pot hat.

"He has his mind med up, that bay," said Pattie, having coaxed the brown to scramble down, "that he will not let Cafferty idle for a week or so. It was the bottomest stone he hit the first that time."

And though the bay scattered walls as if heavy grey stones were chaff, Father Con was happy ; oblivious of the marks and bumps with which he was embellishing a two-hundred-pound animal ; oblivious of everything save the hounds in front, the sound pasture under his horse's feet, and the rush of the clear morning air against his freckled face.

"We are in for a great hunt, and the Lord send he will make our bend towards the funeral, so I won't be late," said Father Con as he pushed the bay up a long rise, which the youngster took with the roll of youth and inexperience.

The network of grey walls gave way to fields fenced by banks. The bay leapt lightly on the first they met; charged with a deer's activity; jumped the wide ditch outside, with three feet to spare.

"Might it be as long as it likes now," beamed Father Con, looking up the hill in front of him, and forgetting all duties. "Steady there! Hold hard on the right."

Hounds' heads were up; a flock of scared, circling sheep had given the hard-pressed fox a chance.

Derrick held them on from Fronagh Hill, and lost another five minutes, for Father Fox had turned sharp when he realized that for the minute the deadly yap-yap behind him had died away, and was slipping back to covert, probably hoping devoutly that one of his sons would be eaten there in his place.

Madge Deane, who had been alternately absorbed in spasms of healthy enjoyment and qualms of complete misery, for the bay's heart was doubtful as to banks, looked round and missed her husband. It was naturally Father Con's place to console her.

"The Captain was knocked at the first fence," he said cheerily, "an 'twas I struck him, too. There is not a hap'orth of harm to him. I saw him runnin' like a deer around after the horse."

Mrs. Deane said, "Oh!" uncertainly.

"And if you start to look for him you will only lose yourself an' the rest of the hunt," counselled Father Con cheerily. "Isn't that so, Mr. Quin?"

At this point Captain Deane himself, streaked with green and brown, appeared. He had spent a lively ten minutes catching his horse, and was stored with wrath. Father Con received him pleasantly.

"I was just telling the lady you were well," he said. "I was most regretful that I should strike you, but

that grey of Fenessy's never could keep his legs over a drop ; the shove was nothin' if he had shoulders. He might have given you a worse one at the next, an' we were not to meet there."

Captain Deane opened his mouth and shut it . . . words failed him.

"So there's providence in everything, and 'twas as well for that horse of yours to have the flat places to come through after us. They have it!" cried Father Con, with as much joy in his notes as in Mallard's, one of the puppies.

They had, but the green banks lay up the hill, and the tangle of loose grey walls in front again ; a tangle through which the bay colt smashed with the same light-heartedness as before for a short time, and then, shin sore, took to refusing.

It was bitterness to Father Con to gallop into one large place with hounds running hard up the next field, and feel the flung-out legs and humped shoulders of a refuser in front of him.

When, urged by whip and reins, the bay took the wall, he simply floundered through on his head, right under the eyes of Mr. Peter Cafferty, who stood gloomily silent, chewing the cud of his wrath.

"His three calves an' the pony, right out of the paddock," announced Mike cheerfully. "'Twas well 'twasn't yerself or meself, Pattie, that med for the haggart wall to get around that way."

As hounds ran fast back into Ballinmena, there was no one by the covert side. Mat had disappeared. But hounds were scarcely in when the disappointed lodging of their note in one spot marked that the old fox had got to ground.

Derrick Knox Harding said several things pungently

which concerned Mat, but he did not suspect that a girl with her hair pulled about, and her dress green and torn, crouched not far away from the earth which she had opened.

"To give the poor craythur a chance when I heard them all comin' back," said Creina to herself, "with every find ten shillin' to Mat."

The Master moved off to draw Contra Gorse and woods about a mile away.

Father Con, sighing deeply, put in the bay horse, which he said was a torment over walls, and that he'd have to belt the bike to be in good time.

The way to Contra was across country. Andy found himself riding by a slim girl on a pony, who wailed over the hunt she had watched.

"For I *tried* to make this pony follow along, and he just wouldn't," wailed Kitty, "not even down the first crockery of loose stones, and Fenessy said he could jump."

"Fenessy is well able to say it, missie," remarked Andy drily, "an' more."

"He'll say now it's my fault," said Kitty Adair, "because I can't ride. If I had one of these lovely things of yours now."

The "lovely thing" she pointed at was the brown three-year-old which had passed from excessive timidity to complete recklessness, and was hurling itself over a stone wall as if impelled by unseen force.

Andy suggested that when the brown was trained Miss Adair could try him.

"But what you want, miss, is something that will care you," said Andy in his kind voice; "something that knows what you don't know, and that you can't knock down by a pull at the wrong time. There's a

bay I'm sending to the Fair—a made horse. I'd like you to have him."

At this point they reached the stone wall, the pony absolutely refusing to look at it. He would trot up rather gallantly, and then stand looking over with an interested expression. Miss Adair whipped and pulled and entreated, until Andy said she would do herself a mischief with the heat she was getting into.

"Will ye get off him?" said Andy, hailing Pattie on the brown, "and let Pattie up. Now, Pattie—learn him."

The pony, caught in a grasp of iron, realized defeat. He jumped the wall with the cleverness of his kind, slipping over it quite easily.

But as Pattie put the pony back again, for practice, Andy gasped to see little Miss Adair sailing over on his brown three-year-old, with a foot of light between her and the saddle, and the expression of a soul admitted to Paradise on her face.

"Oh, please let Pattie beat him a little more," pleaded Kitty. "I am so tired. *Please.*"

Andy was an Irishman. He merely sighed resignedly, and hoped for the best.

"Have a care then," he said, "and keep with me."

As hounds rattled a cub round Contra, Kitty Adair brought her people to talk to Andy.

"He has lent me this lovely horse to ride over the wall," she said. "That pony just flapped his front legs as it every time. And he has got other horses, Madge. Made-up ones. We must see them."

Madge Deane, nodding graciously, smiled at her chattering sister.

"Mr. Fenessy," she said, "wished us to buy these

two animals. "I do it all, you see. I have bought for friends of mine since I was a child. My husband knows very little about buying horses, but they were so cheap I took them at once. The grey is very handsome, is he not? and this chestnut."

"I'd never mind an unsound one myself if he'd do work," said Andy mildly. "You're quite right, ma'am."

As Mrs. Deane's pained flush explained that she had not been aware of any unsoundnesses, Andy coughed softly.

"He did not go lame," said the young lady, stiffly "I tried him, Mr.—er——"

"Quin," said Andy, "and he never might either. He has had those spavins so long, he might work for ever and keep sound."

"What?" said Mrs. Deane, in staccato tones. "What?"

With the twinkle deepening in his eyes, Andy reflected that this would be a pleasant lady to sell horses to. Charitable impulse forbade further speech. He regretted what he had said, but spavins to Andy were so easy to see that he had not dreamt of their not being detected immediately by a lady who talked with superiority of buying her friends' horses.

"The fox!" shrilled Miss Kitty suddenly, with an hysterical gasp. "The whole fox! Oh, Mr. Quin, let me stay on this leaping horse."

For Pattie was down, about to change.

"He is in again," said Andy. "Very well, stay on the pony, Pat; a few lambastin's will do him no harm."

"Is that," inquired Kitty, "anything which I could use?"

"What, missie?" Andy's eyes were fixed keenly on the patch of gorse.

"A—lamp-pastin'," said Miss Kitty carefully. "Can you buy them at saddlers'?"

"God above save the innocent!" said Pattie to the pony.

Andy merely coughed and twinkled.

Before the fox broke again Colonel Hugh Gore bore down upon the strangers. An erect, elderly man, who rode more hunts with his tongue than any man in Cahervally. No one impressed strangers as much as Colonel Hugh; told them where to go; how to ride the fences; to follow him if they were in doubt; and yet strangely unavoidable accidents prevented his appearance close to hounds. A girth broke; his horse went tender; he got wired, bogged, all these before he came up on the stony safety of the road.

With the friendliness of his race, Colonel Gore greeted the three; bade them be careful how they left Contra.

"Wire to the right there—a nasty fence. The river cuts across the wood—nasty wet river," said Gore sonorously. "Got into it once—beginning of a great hunt from here."

"That would be the day the horse laid down with you, Colonel," said Andy thoughtfully. "We ran to Rathban that morning."

He pointed to a distant hill, dark under a mass of threatening clouds.

Colonel Gore particularly disliked the twinkle in Andy's eyes, but he drew the Deanes away, and they listened breathlessly to accounts of what the Cahervally hounds could do, and how Hugh Gore could follow them.

"There's no time to look about you; one must ride right from the start. And, by the way, if you're staying the winter and want horses, I have a nice black mare——"

"Save us," observed Andy to himself, "the heaven!"

"That I could show you. A perfect lad's mount, temperate and yet free—very clever at drops."

"With the fear of her tendons," murmured Andy.

"And fast—very fast."

"Till she's beat," whispered Andy again.

"What," said Kitty, who had adopted Andy as her protector, and was close to him, "are you saying about heaving and tendons and beating?"

Andy started guiltily and blushed. Miss Kitty grinned.

"I don't know even what sort of tails horses grow," she said. "I've been at school abroad always, so I'd ask; but Madge knows everything, so she asks no one. All that you said," went on Kitty, "was about that black mare. . . . I know. And——"

"He's away," said Andy. "Hssh! not a word now. Ah! easy, Colonel—don't shout!"

Not to assert his presence, even to a fox, was a severe trial to Hugh Gore; he bit off a strident screech between reluctant teeth, as a frightened cub scurried past their horses and away for Ballinmena. He was learning the life's lesson which might make him an old fox.

Owing to Gore in his enthusiasm crossing the line to tell the Master exactly where to go, the cub got a little more chance.

"Just by the red cow, Derrick, between her and the black and white."

What Mr. Knox Harding said to himself was "And under the old ass's nose," but with a patience born of long experience of Colonel Gore, he said nothing aloud.

One of the puppies had it first, Pillager, a hound who was to go far. Old Ravager flung past him almost contemptuously. The cub would have to stretch his legs with the dog pack close on him.

The line was an easy one. Colonel Gore swept the Deanes into his train with an urgent "Follow me," and led them to a long wood where threading their way through trees effectively delayed them. Andy Quin said, "Come along," to the strange girl on his three-year-old, and indulgently waited for her while she amused herself in his name at the first wall. Miss Adair had never learnt to jump; but her heart was in the right place; she had got her stirrups before the next and clutched the breastplate as she rose, so that the dive was not so violent. By the time they had got over three walls Kitty was merely bumping ardently.

The fat cub reached Ballinmena just in front of the hounds, but he disturbed one of Mat's carefully preserved "pups" as it made its way back from a hedge to its home. The Contra cub dived into the open earth with extreme haste, leaving his flustered friend of Ballinmena to rush off to his hedge again with scant chance for his life, crossing the bog field on his way to it.

Now half-way across the Ballinmena bog stretches a wide drain with crumbly, boggy banks. No one jumps it, because there are several passages, and the take-off and landing make a fall more than probable.

Miss Kitty swung round the blown three-year-old

as hounds poured out on the fresh fox, merely looking on it as an incident of the chase. Wildly overjoyed because she was now alongside the flying pack, she raced the youngster at the ditch with loose reins, her hands firmly clutching the mane.

The three-year-old jumped wildly but half-heartedly, and the muddy waters closed on Kitty.

"The horse will be drownt," yelled Pattie, who had successfully lambasted Fenessy's pony over the gaps. "The mud is glue down in it. Oh! Cripes, the good brown an' a gap beside her."

"An' the child herself," said Andy, as he flung himself off. "God save her! Is she under him?"

She was not. Kitty was already clawing at the peaty banks, raising an astonished and dripping face to her rescuers.

"The stupid thing plunged into it," gasped Kitty. "It is very wet in this canal."

"Canal, God save ye!" observed Pattie, as he reached for the brown's bridle. "The bog dyke that no one leps! Woa there! Struggle, ye omadthan! Praises be, but he has footing got anear the passage."

The brown horse emerged just as the Ballinmena cub was having last honours paid to him amid the pack of eager, yelping hounds.

"There's one that'll take no more chickens," observed Honora Madden pleasantly. "Success to ye, for dogs; if I had me way ye'd never go hungry."

Kitty Adair had twice completely failed to get her drenched self up to the top of the bank, and Andy found a helper. A dark, shabby, good-natured-looking youth with friendly eyes, threw his hand to

someone to hold, and knelt down to give another hand.

"Let you take the left and I'll take the right, Mr. Moroney," said Andy.

"Now, Andy, pull! I'll show you she is heavy."

Miss Kitty remarked indignantly that she was not, it was the wet mud. "Nine stone," said Kitty, with chattering teeth.

"Oh, you're none of you over that. One, two—Here she comes!"

Kitty landed on the bank with a plop and a jerk, which upset the balance of one of her rescuers, so that they fell together on the field, while a generous supply of diluted mud smeared itself on Mr. Costello Moroney's face.

"One would think you had been in yourself," giggled Kitty heartlessly, as she sat shivering.

Andy seized the young lady by the shoulder and commenced to propel her at a trot towards his house.

Pattie took the horses, and Moroney followed. Presently he had to help, for Kitty's breath gave way as she waddled in her wet clothes.

"May the Hevins above help an' save us—there's huntin' for ye," wailed Mrs. Cafferty from the door.

"Dreepin' for all the wurld like them haythin say merrymaids ye do be readin' of, an' the master goin' to wheel her across the clane hall that I washed only last Thursday week."

Here Honora, who had been patting butter, gave severe comment to the effect that young ladies should be within in their mothers' drawin'-rooms workin' posies in silks an' satins, an' not out gallivantin' after dogs and foxes.

Andy was merciful to the hall. He brought Kitty

to the bright kitchen, and left her to the women, who were now as sympathetic as they had been severe.

"Drowned the craythur! Mud and wather to the bone. Will ye dhrop the worst of thim from ye, here, miss, and there's a big tub I'll carry to the front room, with hot wather an' soap."

Mrs. Cafferty was a lady of resource. Having considered her own Sunday best and completely ignored the offers from Honora of a gran' shawl an' a nate skhirt, she put her head out of the door and wailed "Pattie," Creina prompting her at her shoulder.

Pattie, who was doing his horses, appeared reluctantly.

"Pattie, let ye take the spotty pony an' belt away up the boreen to Creina's mother, an' say the young lady here is drowned, an' ask for the new white blouse Creina got at Geoghan's on Saturday week—the white, Pattie, not the puce—blue is it, Creina?—not the blue; an' Creina's stripy skirt that Miss Molloy med, an' let ye go like the winds, Pattie, or I'll know the raison why."

Pattie, whose memory was not retentive, listened to this duet, scratched his head, tore the spotty pony from a cart, and went. Having first reduced Mrs. Casey to a delightfully tearful excitement, he proceeded to check her offers to help to lay out the corpse, and returned with the blue blouse and the skirt, leaving the white behind.

Kitty, who had been led to a bright little bedroom with a blighted feeling as to the air, changed into the board-like garments lent by Mrs. Cafferty, and having received a severe lecture as to the danger of "blasts of air an' ye cowl'd—or even an' ye warm" when the window was found open, eventually descended with

her curly hair damp and loose, and her slight figure hiding in Creina's skirt and bright blue blouse.

Mr. Moroney said something to himself as she came in.

Hot tea and hot bread were ready in the best parlour, where a fire tried to warm the cold chimney but not the room. The party was now augmented by Captain and Mrs. Deane, the latter exceedingly angry with Kitty for having fallen into a ditch, the former vaguely but somewhat ignorantly dissatisfied with his horse.

"Madge, of course, knows all about hunters," he said; "but——"

Madge said, "Certainly," in a chill voice.

"But the beast was not pleasant," grumbled Oliver Deane; "he pulled and he tripped and he ran into people."

"Mr. Quin," said Kitty, "has lovely horses. Let us buy some things from him."

Andy smiled slightly.

"I'm going to," babbled Kitty. "I am going to spend all my quarter's allowance on one and go in debt. I won't have any more of Fenessy's ponies."

"Does he make you comfortable up there now?" said Andy politely, ignoring the horse-dealing question.

"We came to Ireland prepared to *Rough It*," announced Madge Deane rather loudly.

"The chickens at Fenessy's," said Captain Deane mildly, "look so active when they come up for dinner—they borrow sauce to put over them from the paper-hanger next door—and, no, we are not comfortable at all."

Kitty, sawing a piece of crust off the loaf, said she wished Mr. Quin kept an hotel.

Costello Moroney, who had so far preserved silence, said suddenly that he wished he did. "With fifteen empty rooms," he added rather sadly, "I might. Only my guests mightn't like shower baths in their bedrooms. Andy's roof is sound."

"Do you mean to say," said Madge Deane, "that you do not mend your roof?"

Costello smiled pleasantly; he said he was afraid that there wasn't a tradesman in Cahervally who would take the job as a speculation, and he certainly couldn't pay for it. "There's always something else that has to be done—a hunter to buy—or a couple of youngsters," said Mr. Moroney cheerily.

Mrs. Deane turned a square shoulder on him openly.

The spotty pony, now placed in an inside trap, was ready to take Kitty back to Fenessy's hotel.

Mr. Moroney said he would be glad to drive her and then bring the pony back, if she approved. He had a parcel to fetch from Cara station.

So Kitty, full of thanks, drove off in a coat of Andy's.

Mr. Moroney's remarks on the drive could have been easily counted for a time, then he thawed to loquacity as he spoke of hunting and his horses; and then again, as they pattered down the broad road into the village, he grew silent once more.

"It's not fit for you," he said, as he pulled the spotty pony up.

This referred to the Cara Hotel, a small, narrow building on the side of the street. A reek of porter drifted from the public-house down below; the upstairs windows were tightly closed.

"They've shut them again," said Kitty resignedly. "What are windows for in Ireland, Mr. Moroney?"

"To save oil," said Costello cryptically.

When Father Con dropped in after his funeral to inquire for the horse, he found old Andy dreaming over the fire.

"An' was it a good buryin'?" Andy inquired.

"'Twas all among the bank country, annyways," said Father Con; "that same was a comfort after the mornin' shatterin' walls."

CHAPTER III

"**T**O think I'll be away from it all in the hay-making," said Andy. "Maybe old Danny'll see to it all, but I'd rather trust Anne Cafferty if it came to huntin' after the men," he added, smiling.

"You really want to go, Andy?" Costello Moroney had ridden over the day after the cub hunt. He seemed to look for something he could not find in Andy's yards, then he walked with the old man across the fields to the covert.

"Amn't I dreamin' of it for years, Mr. Costello, and all me life since—they went from me? 'Come and see me where we're lying, Andy,' she wrote, 'and put up a stone to us yourself.' And so I would not go untill there was enough an' plenty, not to shame her people out there. I'll be taking away the plain stone, an' the people there is sendin' me pictures. There's one I'd fancy—see, Mr. Costello," he pulled some pictures from his pockets. The "one he fancied" was a florid picture of weeping angels gathered round a white marble cross, with vases and urns behind the figures.

"That's grand, isn't it?" said old Andy. "It be a hunder an' fifty pound when it's up—an' worth it."

Costello Moroney coughed gently as he admired. He thought of the quiet old man going out away

among strangers, with his savings ready to spend. Andy had been very patient, it was no use to go until he was ready.

"I'd have no bizness there," said Creina's soft voice, speaking unhappily. She was coming up the boreen, a muddy little track hidden by high thorn hedges.

"Me A'nt Maria Henessy knows how to give a hop," replied a boastful voice. "I'm sayin' ye must come. It's time for ye to give over bein' a child, Miss Casey. Come along now."

"Miss! God save us," observed Andy snappily. "An' they boys together these years back."

Creina and her companion came into sight at the gate leading into the field. The girl was flushed and looked distressed, she carried a parcel in her hands.

Mr. Timsy Henessy, who walked with her, was a plump youth, with a fiery complexion and a taste in dress. His check suit and tan gaiters were horsily genteel, his tie carried a horse-shoe pin of rolled gold. His high collar still remembered that it had been clean on Sunday. Timsy owned the two-storied state house by Dromin Wood, where he now lived in state, with a hunter and an outside car. He looked after it with all the success which could be expected of a youth who did no work himself and spent a great portion of his time out amusing himself. The Bank knew how the Henessy balance had dwindled since his father's death, and Timsy behind his swagger knew it too.

"If that coat was a taste longer 'twould make a shirt on him," murmured Andy. "Into Molloy's, no less, for his clothes and all made to order. He has a

race mare bought now, an' he's lookin' for the Hunt Cups with her. Good evenin', Timsy."

Timsy removed his cap with a flourish. Creina sidled round to Andy. Her pretty eyes searching round the covert, presently she saw someone mending a fence which the Hunt had knocked down. Her glance at Mr. Henessy was exceedingly bitter. Creina had the reputation of being an heiress. The Caseys were well to do. Behind his admiration, Timsy knew how five or six hundred pounds would help him on his way—put in the young stock he had omitted to replace when he sold; give him a fresh start on the farm. He wanted money quite badly.

"There's Mat below, mendin' Callaghan's boundary," said Andy, the twinkle suddenly rising in his eyes. "Isn't it decent of him now?"

Creina flushed guiltily. The fence which Mat was raising would have been on her way home if she had gone across the fields.

"I have a pound of sugar here that mamma bid me borry off Anne Cafferty last week," said Creina. "I was goin' up with it. Will you be in, Uncle Andy?"

"I will be with you, Creina."

But so also was Mr. Timsy Henessy, who wished to see Andy's horses. Timsy was a great judge, he walked round the boxes knowingly; he flicked in true horse-dealer fashion at the horses, to make them gather up their quarters and stand well. He crabbed one for its lack of bone, another for its ugly head. In fact he strongly advised old Andy to take what he could get for the three horses and put in his, Timsy's, black four-year-old mare, which he would part with for a consideration.

"If ye wanted her, I would not carry her to the Fair, Andy," he said grandly.

Andy thanked him meekly, the twinkle deepening in his eyes.

"Not bein' quite up to me own weight," said Timsy, stretching out a bulgy leg, "I'd part. She should win in her class——"

"She might if she met it," said Andy abruptly.

Here Timsy eyed him suspiciously, but Andy was buckling up the roller on his brown horse and his face was blankly innocent.

"Ye're right; 'twould be hard for her," said Timsy.

"It would," said Andy heartily. "She is a pretty sort of mare and did well. Did you only put a charge on the bad leg or did you blister it during the summer?" he said mildly. "An' the grunt Lennon spun her for?"

Timsy lighted an American cigarette with some haste. His hopes of selling the mare to Andy were no longer alive.

What Timsy Henessy said to himself was that the ould devil knew everything ye wouldn't want him to know; aloud, having lighted the cigarette, he remarked that the bit of a swellin' in the leg had gone down of itself and that the mare was never a grunter. Also, with sudden blighting emphasis, that he was only giving Andy the chance, as the new officer at Ballinmena was looking at the mare.

A small motor, a two-seater with a dicky at the back came down the bumpy laneway leading to the house. Mrs. Deane was driving. Behind, in the dicky, Kitty waved and gesticulated.

"And both the horses are dead lame, and one is

sick," she cried, racing across the yard to Andy. "I made Madge come to look at yours, the ones you are sending to market next week."

"Save us," said Andy mildly. "Market!"

Creina had gone into the house. Mr. Henessy felt his tie and looked at his gaiters and wished he had not left the changing of his collar until next day. But he was quite prepared to be agreeable in any collar.

"My! now isn't it disagreeable," he said. "The two horses lame on you, Miss Adair."

"Oh, no! on their own legs," said Kitty. "One's hind shin parts are all swollen, and the chestnut is limping in front. Fenessy says it's knocks, but a man from the village said it wasn't, but—but—old habit—so— Oh, please, *where* are the made-up horses, Mr. Quin?"

"Made-up!" said Costello Moroney gloomily. "Did you never see a horse till you came here, Miss Adair?"

Kitty said heaps in withering tones. Her sister, who was looking haughtily important, shook hands with Andy and hoped Kitty had not been chattering nonsense. But as they really wanted a couple more horses—the cub-hunting was in full swing—they'd come to see those at Ballinmena.

While Pattie fetched a saddle and bridle, Mr. Henessy engaged Madge in conversation.

He thought it must be very disagreeable for the quality above at Fenessy's, he bein' a low sort of a man an' not understanding gentry's wants.

"For I invited him in to luncheon last spring," said Mr. Henessy, "an' he was completely mesmerized when there was cutlet chops made of the

lamb, an' a salad with it dressed with cream and sugar. Me mamma an' meself bein' very particular—she was put out be me askin' Fenessy inside to sit to a meal."

"Dear me," said Madge, vaguely believing Mr. Henessy to be a species of gentleman.

"This is a nice horse," said Andy quietly, "but he lays hold a little."

The rugs were stripped from a long, powerful horse, five years old, with deep girth and great galloping thighs; he was a little plain in front and baker-kneed, but full of quality and substance. Mrs. Deane, who was severely attired, criticized him thoroughly. She took exception at his forelegs and she explained as she went on, to her admiring husband:

"Done too much work, you see, Noll; then they get like that."

"He was foaled with those legs," said Andy mildly.

"Then you don't like him, ma'am?"

Madge whispered to her husband—a smile on her face. "Horses," she said, "were not born with over-worked legs."

Andy put the rugs back on his most valuable horse, and showed a chestnut, a strong, compact little fellow, rather back of his knees and with light hocks.

Mrs. Deane had him out. She was plainly smitten, she liked his galloping, and she liked his trotting, and she directed her husband to get up to try him.

Oliver Deane, though no judge, was a nice horseman. He had spent his days abroad where ponies were his only mounts. He came back, flushed with appreciation, from a lark over a broad bank and two stone walls.

"But he isn't up to your weight, Captain," said Andy. "The lady would have to ride this one."

"He is a taller horse," said Mrs. Deane, "than the brown."

Madge evidently knew all about horse dealing. The chestnut was clearly the animal which Andy did not want to part with, therefore she would have it.

"I know," said Madge to herself, with the arrogant wisdom of twenty-two.

"This one would carry the Captain. I have no more made ones," said Andy. "This is the horse I recommend."

Andy brought out a powerful, well-bred grey, with a big, sensible head, fired for doubtful hocks, as a two-year old, but perfectly sound.

Captain Deane rode the grey. He knew it was stronger than the chestnut, but he was afraid to say so.

When Andy mildly asked his prices, Mrs. Deane opened her eyes. Fenessy's horses had not been at all so expensive. She flicked stones about the yard with her stick, and she thought deeply.

Mr. Henessy, coming to her side, offered adulation.

"Isn't it easy to see now," observed the fat youth, "that there isn't much hid from you in a horse? Isn't it marvellous now to see a lady such a judge? If yourself and the Captain had a afternoon I'd be proud to give ye tea at Dromin House, as I have a neat black mare there that 'a fill yer eye—all quality she is, quality an' gentleness, an' speed. What a real judge would like."

Madge thought Timsy a sensible person, she asked in lowered tones his opinions as to Andy's horses.

"Andy," said Timsy, "is one who knows how to

open his mouth. It is his bizness. A fine rider like yourself can get bargains around—because you know what is good an' worth the money."

Kitty and Costello Moroney had vanished into the brown horse's stable. Kitty thought the five-year-old was a dear, and wanted him for herself.

"And who," Kitty asked, "is that fat youth talking to Madge?"

"He is one Timsy Henessy of Dromin," said Moroney drily, "a farmer who is too gentlemanly to farm."

Madge Deane, lofty and impressive, made up her mind. She would buy the chestnut. She talked knowingly to Andy, she offered ten pounds less than the eighty asked.

"I'll give you a warranty," said Andy, "but the grey is the Captain's horse; the chestnut is a lightweight, all said an' done."

"He can't put *me* off," whispered Madge to Oliver. "Not much. He wants to keep the chestnut."

Mr. Moroney no longer appeared to miss anything at Ballinmena. Kitty pleaded for a ride and Costello superintended a riding lesson given to Kitty on the brown, which cantered and trotted gently with the flopping gait.

"Oh, I want this one," Kitty pulled up. "But I have only ~~five~~ pounds now and I won't be of age for two years. Is he cheap on account of his legs, Mr. Andy?"

Andy's eyes twinkled mildly. He knew two dealers who would give him a hundred and fifty for the horse.

Mrs. Deane wrote a cheque and then drank tea. She unbent a little now her buying was over. Andy's

parlour smelt of smoke, but it was bright and warm. The potato cakes were of flaky lightness, the old china cups were very valuable, and polished until they shone.

"It's nice to see clean things," said Mrs. Deane wistfully. "The cups at Fenessy's are all smears, and the spoons smearier."

"I met Violet," said Kitty, "cutting the bread and butter against her knee; and she blows the dust off the plates before she hands them round."

Mrs. Cafferty sniffed disapproval from behind a relay of potato cakes.

"If ye were to see the bringin' up she had, miss," she said sympathetically, "ye would not wondther if she carried the butter in the coal shovel—the pig-sty bein' broke down there, the pigs was in a corner of the house, an' the clanest of pigs isn't too clane; an' the calf in another; an' the childther the talk of the country-side goin' barefoot to school . . . their mamma been always a steel an' one that'd take a drop too."

"Dear me," said Mrs. Deane nervously.

"Oh, poor Violet," said Kitty.

"Vi'let what are you, miss?" Mrs. Cafferty stopped abruptly at the door.

"No, Violet Meaney," said Kitty, puzzled.

"She may be Vi'let or Primerosy now," said Mrs. Cafferty contemptuously, "but she was christened dacent Mary Catherine and I held her in me two own arrums, her mother been too weakly to rise up. Vi'let, God save us—— Wouldn't two holy saints do her ——" Mrs. Cafferty went out violently.

Mr. Henessy had not come in to tea. He had disappeared suddenly, looking for Creina. That maiden

having flown homewards he searched in vain, so he now reappeared very officious indeed, walking round and handing unneeded things with exquisite politeness, explaining as he did so how his own mamma always had the tea on a tray an' the bread and butter cut neat and skimpy on a plate. "An' the cook's cakes," said Timsy, "on paper dileys."

"Wouldn't ye hate that silly sort of boastin'?" broke in Mrs. Cafferty's voice from beyond the door. "Wouldn't ye, Honora? The cook at Dromin, God save us—cook no less. Would there be a vallie about, d'ye think, to hand the breekusht or maybe a butler in a boardy shirt?"

Mr. Henessy's complexion assumed a lively hue. Kitty choked over her tea, and Mr. Moroney muttered something concerning the price of someone very softly into his tea-cup.

"You should take in paying guests, Timsy," said Moroney pleasantly. "Home comforts and refinement and stables in the back yard."

Henessy looked inquiringly at Moroney's blank face, then pulled his ragged moustache; the twinkle in Andy's eyes deepened.

"There'd be company for thim guests," went on the audible commentor in the kitchen, "above stairs. Didn'd they kennel his share of the baygle dogs in the empty rooms? Didn't ye see thim, Honora?"

"I did, an' they in distemper," returned the powerful voice of Mrs. Madden. "I did so—— They is there yet, them that lived through it."

Timsy said there was a draught of air. He shut the door tightly and somewhat violently.

Kitty, with a little gasp, signed to Costello Moroney to open it; she smiled frankly as he did so, and winked.

Oliver Deane was talking hunting eagerly with Andy, the old man telling stories of bygone gallops which he had ridden.

"An' yet, fine as they were, we have it always at the back of our minds that the finest is in front of us," said Andy. "That some day there'll be the perfect hunt that we'll never go astray in, but take the right turn always; an' never a strand of wire to vex us or a slip of our horses' feet. With the dogs streamin' close to us, till we pulls him down or he saves himself. That's the hunt that's like the spot the rainbow hits the ground in," smiled Andy. "We never quite get it. I remember one we had from Dromeneer near to it. I was riding Gold Crown, a horse that couldn't do wrong, an' I had the nasty twist of joy in me heart that I was near to be alone with them, when up stretches the wire in front for a quarter of a mile, an' no nippers on me. An' be the time I was round, they had turned left-handed away from me, so that meself and many that had all the best of it at first, came up pantin' an' they after eating him. 'An' did ye see much of that hunt, Andy?' says little Davey Higgins to me. 'Twas the best ever I rode.' I declare I think, though I can laugh at it now, I never remember a minnit I felt more bitter to the world than I did to Davey." Andy laughed. "But our old Master, Sir James, struck in then, an' he finished with his fox."

"'He didn't see you, anyhow, Davey,' he says, grinning. 'Not till he met the wire. But that's how reputations is made,' he says, at the finish of the hunt."

A man does not hunt for forty years without having strange stories to tell of strange horses; of the curs which shut up directly they are asked a question; of the wrong-headed brutes who do not mind falling;

of the sticks which the cleverest of men get given to them by strangers—and friends. Andy talked of them.

"I mind a great-looking four-year-old I bought from Colonel Hugh," said Andy, "a black. He was in the collar, and no more. 'He was backward an' I let him run,' says the Colonel, careless like to me. 'Oh, buy him if you'd like, Andy.' Well, I did, for eighty pounds, and there he was, a picture to look at, but he'd lie down after two fields an' 'twould take fire to roast him up. Fold up like one of them hammocky chairs an' smile at you. Didn't it come round to be afterwards that the Colonel was run out of matches on account of the same horse, so he loosed him out in the fields an' pretended he never tried to break him."

"But—it was cheating!" Mrs. Deane broke in; "cheating, Mr. Quin."

"It was horse dealin', ma'am," said Andy mildly. "Wait till ye gets to know what's up with a few of your own in the next few years."

"I thought——" said Creina at the door. Then she saw Timsy and flushed hotly. "I did not know the company was still here," she said shyly.

"Where were you, Creina?" Andy's old face lighted up.

Creina said vaguely that she had been just out around. Her walk had reddened her soft cheeks, and her bright brown hair was exceedingly tossed.

Mr. Henessy looked as a man who finds himself in a cleft stick. He wanted to see Creina home, and he did not want to associate his splendid presence with a shy country girl who was hatless and wore a torn apron.

The party was augmented at this moment by

Father Con, who wanted a horse for the next meet. He was delighted to meet everyone, and there was no hint in him at first of his errand.

"I was up beyond at Egan's," he said.

"Bridgey Egan," interrupted Andy, "is to be married to Dan Malone, I hear."

"She is not then," said Father Con briskly. "For Mat Egan wouldn't give her but one cow, with two beds, and two pigs, and fifty pound in dry money, so Dan Malone's father, that has all the money, broke it off unless he'd give two cows, and 'tis all squared now between Dan and Mary Considine. He was up to myself yesterday on the head of it."

"An' she up to thirty-five years of age," said Andy. "Save us! an' a cast in her near eye."

Father Con observed, in tones of rebuke, that the good Lord had sint the cast, an' anyways, she had three cows an' a hundred pound, an' 'twas settled an' all.

"An' Bridgey the prettiest girl goin' to Mass," said Andy. "I'd be sorry to be Jim Malone's son."

"But Mary having the money," said Father Con, "an' a nice dacent young woman, brought up pious, able to draw out music on the pianny, an' with a stout tongue in her to mind her house. The looks isn't all, Mr. Andy."

"Do you mean to say"—Mrs. Deane leant forward—"that liking counts for *nothing* here; that it's just cows and pounds?"

"Why, what else?" said Father Con simply. "What else?"

Creina's brown hand was at her round throat, pulling at the cheap beads round it. Her colour had gone and her breath fluttered oddly.

"The rest of it is book talk," said Father Con. "They must settle the little bit to keep the farm goin', sensible, as they does."

"They're broke!" Creina's voice broke shrilly across the room; a spatter of beads rolled across the stiff, brightly-coloured carpet. Creina went down on her knees to look for them, and Kitty, stooping to help her, saw that the girl had tears in her eyes.

"What is it?" Kitty whispered. "What is it?"

"Just that, miss—the money an' the cows," gulped Creina, "an' nothin' else matters to the ould—nothin'!" She picked up her beads and slipped out softly, scurrying home across the fields so fast that Timsy, by the time he had made his adieux, could not catch her.

"I wish you'd take us all in here," said Kitty, looking regretfully at the outside of Ballinmena.

"You couldn't, I suppose, Mr. Andy, could you?"

"Kitty," said her sister reprovingly.

"Well, I'd just love to come," said Kitty. "He's got heaps of rooms, and a row of spare stables in that outer yard, and I'd help with the cooking. I can make meringues and scrambled eggs."

"It would be a poor lodging for you," said Andy politely. "You'll fetch the chestnut horse then, Captain, and I wish he was the grey."

The Deanes departed after a heated interval of turning handles, with Mrs. Deane giving at least fifteen reasons for the lack of firing, and Captain Deane working them all out patiently under her directions.

"That lady knows a lot," said Andy, as he stood out in the soft afternoon, "a lot, surely."

His eyes were looking wistfully over the fields to

where a thin spiral of smoke from the Caseys' house stained the air.

"And I'm fearin' they'll make Creina promise Timsy, with the child's heart set on poor Mat below," murmured Andy. "The foolish child she is, but 'tis so, an' I'm afraid for her."

CHAPTER IV

KITTY ADAIR stood outside Fenessy's inn at Cara and looked irritably at the prospect.

Behind her a mingled odour of porter, whisky, and humanity oozed from the doors of the bar. Upstairs she could hear Vi'let shutting the windows of the sitting-room to "kape the curtains quiet." Cara was not handsome to look at. The river ran in front, but hidden from view by high banks and a sodden field. To the right was a rival hotel which Mr. Fenessy despised, but Kitty wondered if it was worse than theirs. A steep road, bordered by thatched cottages, sloped up at one side—cottages where heaps of everything smelly seemed to gather outside the doors; and with healthy pigs patrolling the road searching for what they might pick up.

They were generally accompanied by equally healthy children, towy as to hair, and earthy as to complexion.

The wide street of the village sloped down to the crossroads near the bridge, with sundry shops lining the sides. In the first some strips of faded flannelette were accompanied by two cards of trouser buttons and a box of pins. Kitty had gone in once to buy hairpins, and found the resources inside varied and strange.

Miss Magee, the girl in pigtails, who waited upon her, said she was "near sure she'd seen a packet of hair-

pins above on the piece of cut bacon, but May Magee, her cousin, maybe had them used." There were blue-paper pounds of sugar in there, and ounces of tea, some bottles of striped sweets, and odds and ends of white American bacon.

Beyond this, Mr. Con Fenessy, a "low soort of a felly that was no relation," according to their landlord, mended boots. Beside him, Mr. Crowe mentioned tailoring, and three doors from him Miss Mary Counihan had written a card informing the village that she was a mowdeeste.

Kitty had gone in there too, to get a blouse made, and found a room littered with scraps and pieces of stuffs, and penny papers; its windows closely shut; and Miss Counihan, a lady crowned by brown hair and jewelled side-combs, quite superior as to fashions, and unimpressed by an order from a stranger.

"Havin' an amount of work," said Miss Counihan genteelly, "an' Daisy Maria Delaney's trooso to get through, it wouldn't be on me conscience to promise the blouse agin a fortnight."

"The very latest Daisy's dress'll be," confided Miss Counihan proudly, displaying a brilliant blue gown belarded with buttons and braid, and with a skirt in which Miss Daisy Maria would find it difficult even to hop.

Kitty grinned softly. At that moment the bride-elect arrived flurriedly, to try on, announcing she had a minnute sthole from the missus; and Kitty recognized the future wearer of the blue gown as the maid at the rival inn. Kitty left without getting measured.

Near the crossroads the local butcher hung out stiff dead cows and sheep, and below him was the Whiteley of the village, where one could buy almost

anything of an inferior quality for something over one-and-a-half its price in Cahervally, or double the rate of the London stores. Sardines, tinned tomatoes, bacon, jostled rolls of cheap stuffs and cards of pins and boxes of ribbons.

Kitty sighed and sniffed. The chairs in the small stuffy sitting-room at Fenessy's had evidently been made as a warning against lazy habits. A stale smell of dinner lingered about the air there; even if the small windows had been fully opened, they would not have aired the place, and as it was, Vi'let spent her time shutting them. So Kitty strolled down to the street.

Mrs. Fenessy's voice sounded in the porter-barrel-strawn yard at the back.

"Vi'let, is the chicken dead for the dinner, Vi'let?"

Vi'let, from somewhere, declared in perturbed tones that he was not; his demise having been driven clane out of her mind by Tom Doolan's jennet fallin' on its knees oberight the yard at the minnit she wint out to whip off the cock's head.

"Then I'd say thin as he is not, the speckledy one with the cuk is fatter than the black," shrilled Mrs. Fenessy. "Never mind, Vi'let; whin 'tis biled soft and a nice taste of sauce, who'd be tellin'? Was the jennet hurted, Vi'let?"

"The two knees tore from out of him," said Vi'let; "but sure Tom had a drop in, an' was gallopin' him crool."

Kitty fled upstairs; the unsuspecting provisor of their dinner was walking about in the street and about to be caught.

Here Vi'let had not yet removed breakfast; the dish of eggs which had a peculiar talent of spreading out

to the size of dinner-plates with an infinitesimal island of hard yellow set in a sea of blistered white, still stood on the table. Three each was Mrs. Fenessy's idea of breakfast, coupled with mounds of thick bacon and six sausages.

"Madge," said Kitty to her sister, "we'll have to go away from here."

Mrs. Deane finished a letter before she asked where to, with chill emphasis. "We can't hunt from the town; there isn't a furnished house; and the Granagh Hotel is full."

Kitty shut her ears to the sounds of Vi'let's chasings.

"If old Andy would take us in," she said dolefully. "It's clean there, and the potato cakes are dreams."

"What will ye be after takin' for the lunch?" inquired Mrs. Fenessy. "Caseys should have chops, ma'am."

Kitty knew the long slabs which came up pallid brown in watery gravy. Kitty was hungry and fastidious.

"An' a nice chicken for the dinner," said Mrs. Fenessy, "biled; an' a rice puddin', an' soup."

Madge, writing another letter, said, when Mrs. Fenessy had left, that the people did their utmost to please.

"The chops," said Kitty solemnly, "were sheep yesterday. It was killing day. I think I shall go to Ballinmena and try that horse. I want him for myself."

"There was no idea," said Mrs. Deane crisply, "of your hunting when we came, Kitty. This trip is to make money. We shall want it to furnish Deane's Oak when it's vacant. Noll and I have calculated on all

the fun for nothing and some hundreds in hand. But you hunting—you can't sit on! You could drive the car about, sometimes—to watch."

"When there were no stones on the roads you'd let me," suggested Kitty. "What's the use of twenty thousand pounds when you're twenty-one if you can't have a horse to fall off when you're nineteen? We'll see, Madge."

Kitty also wrote a letter—a long one—before she went out again.

The horses, in hot and narrow stables, had to be looked over. Fenessy's bay, christened "Perfection," had a pair of hocks somewhat resembling elongated plum puddings; his bog spavins took that aspect after a rest.

Fenessy, called to see, pronounced it the "hate of the oats, an' nothin' at all."

The old chestnut limped about uneasily, shifting his feet with ominous regularity. Fenessy looked with eyes of chill criticism on the new arrival.

He wouldn't say but he was a nice breedy little bit of a horse to carry twelve stone. No, he wouldn't say he wasn't. He might lep too: Andy was careful of the lot for sale: an' thrained well.

"Ye'd be givin' up to fifty for him, I suppose," said Mat Fenessy affably. "Not wantin' to make a profit, ye would."

Mat was a large, heavy man, with apple-red cheeks and an importantly sugary manner. He had sold more unsound brutes in his time than probably any man in Cahervally. It was so difficult at first to look behind the crust of sugar and see the dry hard bread underneath.

Madge reddened fiercely, and Noll Deane coughed

thoughtfully, for his wife, as they drove home, had assured him that Mintal would give a hundred and fifty for the chestnut directly he saw him.

The only thing to do at Cara was to walk or ride ; there was nowhere to sit down except the little sitting-room.

Mrs. Deane was just starting for her walk when a youth, who leapt from a rusty bicycle, gave her a note.

It was written on thick paper, with a large red crest embossed on one corner, and " Dromaghmore Castle—letters : Ballinahinch ; Telegrams : Croagh—2 miles " opposite the crest.

Inside, someone whose writing was not her strong point presented her " comps to Mrs. Deane, an' would take it kindly if Mrs. Deane would be pleasant enough to drink a cup of tea at four o'clock. An' hopin' this finds Mrs. Deane as it leaves me at present well, thank God," the writer remained.

" Her sincerely,

" ANNIE HENESSY."

" The missus said she hoped ye'd be over about three, ma'am," said the youth pleasantly, " so as to see the horses."

Mrs. Deane looked dubiously at her husband, who was looking even more dubious than she was. Then she said, " Yes," slowly.

" If Mrs. Henessy will excuse my not writing, we'll be over at three or half-past," she said.

" I think he is quite a nice young man," said Madge, " and his mother, some old-fashioned person, no doubt. We had better go, Noll."

When Kitty and Oliver had abandoned a hopeless contest with the chops, and had eaten some excellent potatoes, and skirted bashfully round a jam tart

filled with a coloured gluey material, they got ready to start.

"We are going to see a horse at Mrs. Henessy's," said Madge to Fenessy, as they started, "of Dromaghmore——" She looked at the letter.

"No but Dromin," said Fenessy curtly, "Dromin. Carry on pasht Andy Quin's, an' the next turn to the left'll bring ye oberight the place. An' have a care of Timsy's horses, Captain. There's great call for boilin' wather there, I tell ye, to say nothin' of a few bottles he knows of."

Mrs. Deane said sharply that Fenessy was a very jealous person. She changed speed with a jar, which nearly sent Kitty off the dicky, and she avoided a cart with more fearlessness than skill, so closely, that, as Patsy, the groom, remarked, the blade of a razor would have had a shiver on it.

They knew the road to Andy's, with the hill towering up from the stretch of bog; beyond the turn down to Ballinmena they came to another narrow lane, along which they drove until a whitewashed, slated farm-house with some exceedingly unhappy plants dying in two flower-beds at either side of a red hall door. The motor had either to be left on the road or piloted through an iron gate, and over a track composed of deep mud; they stopped, wondering if they had made a mistake.

But Timsy, in a new coat and wearing a startling green tie, rushed impressively to meet them. His boots were brazenly new and golden-hued. He wrung their hands as he bade them welcome. Behind him, in a red hobble skirt and a feathered hat, tottered a young lady whom he introduced as "me sister Greece." Miss Henessy had, besides the hat and red dress, put

on long white kid gloves, white stockings, and brogued shoes. She intimated that mamma would be out presently; she was just now engaged writin' a letter, and she shook hands warmly.

Timsy led the way to the yard; there was a path which skirted the mud, and beyond it some paving stones guarded the approach to the tightly closed boxes.

Timsy passed by a wind-sucking grey—people said nasty things about windsuckers afterwards; and a showy chestnut which wouldn't eat. He showed a weedy brown, tied in below the knee, but with a spurious quality about him and a way of carrying his head and tail which Timsy thought might appeal to a lady.

Madge Deane might have been tempted if the horse had not kicked at her viciously when she was approached by a caressing hand.

"But here is the one for ye, for a judge such as yerself." Timsy opened the door of a hot loose box, where, littered to her hocks, blooming and shiny, stood the black mare.

"Here!" said Timsy proudly. "Here she is."

"Miss Doatie!" a shrill voice rose from the back door, and a heated, bedoured maiden appeared. "The missus wants to know is it two eggs or the one in the little cakes; they have a dhry look on her, she says."

The awful glare with which Miss Henessy answered the question sent the questioner scurrying back to her lair.

"That's a foolish pet name they have on me here," explained Timsy's sister loftily. "Me mamma has it on me—it'd tease ye."

Captain Deane replied politely that her own was so very uncommon, "and peculiar," said Oliver. "Greece! Was your mother in it or anything at the time of your birth?"

The inspecting of Fairy, the black mare, was now delayed by a choked splutter from Kitty, and the open-eyed astonishment of Miss Henessy, who giggled and flushed feebly.

"A—er—beautiful country," said Oliver, trying to make his shoulders look severe to Kitty. "A—er—beautiful . . . Kitty!" He breathed something in fierce undertone to his sister-in-law.

"Me mamma saw me name on a paper," said Miss Henessy, confused. "'Tisn't Greece the country at all, Captain, but Greece the name—G-r-ah-c-e, don't y'know. She fancied it; but on top of it all they calls me Doatie."

Oliver Deane fled into the stable hurriedly; he was also confused. His glance at Kitty was full of bitter reproach.

Fairy, the mare, stripped of her rugs, was really a handsome beast; rather light, but with good shoulders and well ribbed up. Timsy alone could have told them how much hot water and lotion had been used to get the bowed back tendon of her off fore down to its present state of flatness.

There was still a softness there which most good judges could have detected. Madge was lost in admiration. Here, in this dirty yard, was the horse of her dreams. It was worth two hundred—three. If she was as lucky as this they would leave Ireland again with a joyous sum in the bank. She asked to see the animal out.

The black mare galloped well; she was put over a

couple of small fences and did them easily and cleverly. Timsy knew how to train a horse.

When he asked a hundred for this black pearl of his farm, Mrs. Deane simply jumped at her.

When Timsy found that details as to soundness were skated over lightly, he grew importantly gracious. He impressed on Madge, and she believed him, how kind it had been of him to show her this horse before he let dealers rush in and have a chance. He told her of astute men who were apparently simply waiting for the stable door to be opened, and who would have given one-and-a-half the money; but Henessy was always soft to the ladies, an' hearing she wanted what was good, he'd kep it for her.

After all this, Madge wrote her cheque quite humbly; she went back to stare at Fairy, who was undoubtedly a beautiful mare; and she thanked Timsy warmly.

Kitty and Grace Doatie fraternized in the sodden yard; Grace talking with less care and more confidence to a fellow-girl.

"He has had that mare a long time now," confided Grace; "near on two years. Take a wink from me, Miss Adair, be bandaging her against she does work."

Kitty took a mental note; she thought she would tell Andy, and that she must learn to understand about horses.

"Mrs. Henessy sint me out to say—miss—that the tay is drawn an' waiting on ye," delivered the waiting-maiden, all in one breath.

"We'll be strollin' in," said Grace shyly.

They skirted the mud heaps and got round to the front, where the red hall door was now propped open. A stiff and chilly room had the air of standing ready for their reception, its ornaments were, as it were, on

parade; its chairs set neatly; the grate lurked rustily behind a pot of paper flowers, made, as Grace whispered to Kitty, above in the convent.

Sundry paintings of flowers and fruit adorned the walls. A stuffed fox surmounted the piano, which was open with a song on the music rack.

Mrs. Henessy, plainly ill at ease, in a purple silk dress, received them. She was a hard, bitter, shrewish-looking woman, with face and hands lined by work and ill temper.

Tea was elaborately spread upon a tray; an iced cake tied about with ribbons occupied the top tier of a wicker cake-stand; there was no lack of gentility at Dromin, no sitting round a table.

Flanking the cake was a plate of thick sandwiches, substantially imposing.

Madge, who was in a state of pleasant exultation, broke a stiff silence by telling of their difficulty in finding the house.

"Your paper had one name on it," she said; "but Fenessy gave us another, or we might have looked for ages.

"That was the nearest thing Timsy could get at Egan's in the town," said Grace absently. "He went lookin' for stamped paper, and he said that came very near the place. 'Twas what you'd call a sample sheet. It's true, Timsy, wasn't I with ye?"

Mrs. Henessy poured some bitter black tea into the cups; she pressed food on her guests; and glared at her daughter.

"A slice of the cake now, or a san'wich? Timsy assured me ye could not do without san'wiches, they are always in teas in novels. He is a great reader is Timsy."

Kitty bit a sandwich and looked for a dog. Tinned tomato, lavishly spread on butter, is cloying to the appetite. Timsy's dog, judging by his splutter of disgust, also found it so, but he was polite enough to pursue his researches under the table.

If two eggs had been wanted for the little cakes they certainly ought only to have had one, or vice versa. They crumbled leadenly beneath one's fingers, and a bite into them suggested raw egg and dough.

After no luncheon Kitty felt wrathfully hungry. She listened irritably to Timsy's flow of conversation, and only spoke herself to Grace Doatie, who, beneath her adornment, was shyly human.

When the dog, having smeared the tomato all over the carpet, came out again, he showed appreciation of what Kitty smuggled to him, including the rock-like casing of the bought cake which he growled over as a bone.

When tea was over everyone went back to see the mare again, but Kitty, chilled, hungry, slipped away onto the road. The rattle of wheels made her look round. Costello Moroney, in a round trap drawn by an awkward-looking horse, pulled up to talk to her.

"I was just trying this one in harness," he said; "he has a bad leg and won't stand hunting."

Kitty looked at Mr. Moroney dolorously. She explained that she had wanted to see Andy and now it would be too late.

"If you weren't afraid of the mare," suggested Costello, "you could leave a message for your people."

Kitty pulled her coat from the motor, and wrote a line and pinned it on the seat—the car possessed all kinds of embellishments as to note-books and clocks and maps—and she got into the trap.

The brown horse was not lacking as to pace. Having backed twice into the hedge, he started at a gallop which he kept up until they took a piece of the trap off at Andy's gate, and were finally stopped by Pattie opening his arms at them at the kitchen door.

"I have come to have some tea, and I *am* so hungry," said Kitty to Mrs. Cafferty.

"An' welcome ye are," beamed Anne; "welcome, missie."

No one would have credited the pace at which thin cakes, made with buttermilk and much butter, were made and baked. Andy, coming in from the farm, found Miss Adair revelling in their crispness, but declining the array of boiled eggs set before her.

"It's starvation up there," said Kitty gloomily; "there is a chicken for dinner; he was alive this morning . . . and white sauce. I shall die at Fenessy's."

"The Lord save us, but the child is lookin' peaky," said Mrs. Cafferty sympathetically. "Have another, asthore; don't be leavin' thim for Mister Costello that gets lashins at home."

Kitty looked sadly at the cake; she was really feeling the effects of bad feeding and stuffy air.

"If you could take us in here," she said. "Madge's maid would do all the housework, and I shouldn't starve."

"An' three rooms ready above," said Mrs. Cafferty. "Ye'd be welcome to me, miss, anyways. An' the parlour to yerselves."

Mrs. Cafferty liked bustling; extra work never troubled her.

Kitty, crouching over the fire, then told them of Madge's new purchase.

A silence, more pungent than any words, greeted the announcement. Mr. Moroney took his cigarette from his lips, and contemplated it very thoughtfully. Andy's eyes twinkled with faint wrath.

"What's wrong with her?" said Kitty. "What?—I know there's something."

No one said anything for a time.

"It might be—what is not wrong with her," said Moroney gently, "and it might not be. Here is the car for you."

"I am going in by the train to-morrow to buy a car for myself," said Kitty. "It's no use being rich when you are twenty-one if you can't have what you want. And I want Mr. Andy's brown horse, too, to learn to hunt on."

"Why did you flit off, Kitty?" demanded Mrs. Deane acidly.

"Because I was so hungry," said Kitty, climbing on to the dicky. "I've had nothing since spread eggs at breakfast time."

Madge withered her sister and talked of her mare. Such a pearl had never been found before in an equine sea. Quality—substance—breeding.

"Oh! where are all your eyes to let a poor little Englishwoman come and get such a bargain?" chaffed Madge airily.

Costello Moroney said absently that coals cost such a lot now, he couldn't afford her.

"Coals!" said Mrs. Deane acidly; "what have coals got to do with horses?"

"Making the water hot," said Costello softly. "When you have to be at it all day, it mounts up, you see."

Mrs. Deane, narrowly missing two of Honora's

chickens, drove off, wondering if that poor Moroney youth had his wits quite about him. "Hot water!" snapped Madge. "What *are* you saying, Kitty?"

"That I don't believe in Timsy Henessy," returned Kitty—"it's no use driving into that donkey cart, Madge—because I don't—but his sister Greece talked of bandages . . . and I don't know about horses' legs, but I heard Mr. Andy say 'tendons' to Mr. Moroney, and—and—— Oh, dear! I want to go to Ballinmena and hunt from there."

Next day saw Kitty Adair immersed in buying a motor-car. She went to Cahervally by the morning train, and sought the homes of cheap cars. Mr. Moroney also came in by train; he told Kitty he had a lot to buy in the town; but he spared time to take her to two garages, where nothing second-hand or cheap could be found, and finally to a third, the home of despised but useful Americans.

Here a second-hand two-seater, barely used, had just come in. Kitty took a drive in it, she even drove it—she had often steered her brother-in-law's. She listened to learned disquisitions which she understood nothing of, and she went away undecided.

The morning had worn away to luncheon time. Mr. Moroney, still ignoring all the things he had to buy, took Kitty to the local Rumpelmayer's.

The hot little shop was full of a chattering crowd. Colonel Gore, impressively friendly, swooped upon Kitty, introducing his three daughters and his son, a plump-cheeked young fellow of twenty-five, who had never worked to get into anything, and rather prided himself on his idleness.

"Much better off in the country," said Lancelot Gore sapiently; "army's a rotten profession nowadays."

Costello Moroney was brushed aside. Colonel Gore invited Kitty to join them at luncheon.

"Won't take a refusal—positively; we've ordered a boiled chicken."

"I am lunching," said Kitty firmly, "with Mr. Moroney"; and she shuddered.

She might eat Mr. Moroney's luncheon then, but they would all lunch together at the same table.

The upstairs room was invaded by the party, and Kitty told again of her errand.

"I shall have plenty of money later, you see," she said, "and I can't get any now. Just a mean little allowance. But the old lawyers give me something from a car and a horse."

It appeared immediately that Colonel Gore had exactly the car to suit her. A second-hand two-seater, which ran alone, without, it would seem, aid from petrol or oil or anything costing money. Its airy progress left tyres uninjured for ever. It steered as a dream; preferred going uphill to down. But Colonel Gore wanted a larger one. And it was for sale for a hundred and fifty pounds.

"Don't!" whispered Costello, as he helped Kitty to apple fritters; so far he had said nothing.

Colonel Gore considered the matter settled. Kitty should have the car before anyone else.

"You are all so very kind here," said Kitty gently; "just like Timsy and the mare."

"Timsy," said Lancelot, with uplifted eyebrows.

"Timsy . . . What?"

"Yes, he gave my sister his mare though everyone

wanted her, and now you're just as kind about the car. Oh, Mr. Moroney, you're choking."

"There are a lot of pips in these apples," said Costello, recovering.

Colonel Gore observed testily that pips in apple fritters were most undesirable. He continued to enlarge on the jewel-like radiance of his car's virtues, but with the corner of an eye glancing towards the silent Mr. Moroney. Kitty was to go to luncheon to see it. Lancelot should drive her for a trial. Miss Adair rode high on a wave of popularity.

When luncheon had reached the stage of weak coffee and plates of pastry, another hunting man, Henry Dunally, bustled into the room, looking for Colonel Gore. The newcomer was very large and stoutly built, his weather-beaten face was cut across by a particularly stubbly moustache, and it was evident that he looked on Cahervally as the centre of the universe, and on Henry Dunally as its king. He had a rooted objection to the invasion of the stranger in the hunt, having some fixed idea that these riders took a particular joy in riding over new grass, and knocking down fences, and otherwise doing damage.

Having been introduced to Kitty he asked sourly if they meant to stay long, and looked at her suspiciously.

"I came with the claim for the gate," he said, "knocked in the cub hunt from Ballinmena, and splintered. It came to me by mistake. They broke the lock and then trampled the gate to splinters. Some stranger who knew no better," snorted Mr. Dunally, again looking luridly at Miss Adair. "There's the way to stop sport," grumbled the big man; "tearing and damaging for nothing."

"It is Patsy Keogh's gate?" said Moroney mildly. "If it is you can let that be, Henry. Oh, I know it's Gore's business, but you can let it be all the time."

He listened patiently to the stream of wrath which poured from Mr. Dunally's lips.

"It is not that Patsy hasn't as good a right to be paid as another because he drinks," said Costello mildly. "It's only he lays that gate flat every time he expects the hounds, and he sends in the claim to the Colonel because he knows he'll be sure to have forgotten about the last one—and whatever he gets Patsy spends in whisky. He must have been terrible bad to send the letter to Dunally here. I picked up the old gate myself last time, and laid it beside the fence so as to have the splinters safe away. Five shillings will do for him, anyhow."

Mr. Dunally sat down heavily, as he now wished, in biting tones, to know if the hunt funds were to be wasted on rogues.

"It would have been a pound if I hadn't been here," said Costello, unmoved, "with all your fuss. And he has a litter every year on his place; but five shillings will do till he claims again."

"You'd think the hunt was in liquidation to hear him," said Costello, when Dunally had left. "And if the claims are getting bigger, why, we're all getting poorer, and the poorer you are the less it matters to yourself what you spend." With which amazing statement, Costello looked at Kitty and talked of missing trains.

"Remember the day we tried to get up the Cappagh Hill, Colonel," he said pleasantly, "with the last train coming into the station and not enough petrol to take us home in the car? And how we ran back half-way

up and killed Mrs. Cassidy's old pig? Blessings on it, for it braked the car and jammed the wheel, and we just on the edge of the black ditch. Was it the carburettor that time, Colonel, or the ignition, or what? It was different from the last time, I know."

Colonel Gore looked over Costello's head with blighting ill-humour. He invited Kitty to luncheon on Saturday, and he suggested that if she liked the car, as she could not fail to do, she could get a man from the garage who would drive it until she learnt how to herself.

"It's so absolutely simple," said Elaine Gore. "I can drive quite well—when it starts," she added thoughtfully.

At this point Colonel Gore began to look for Kitty's sister; he appeared quite hurt when he found that Kitty had come in alone. With fussy kindness he wished Elaine or Eva to see her to the station, and then suddenly remembering that they could not, directed Lancelot to do so.

Mr. Moroney, who had done none of his commissions, stood listening to the different arrangements without proffering any remark.

When everything was quite settled he looked quite sweetly at young Mr. Gore.

"I have to go up to O'Mealley's yard now," he said. "They lost my whip there last time. Terrible careless crowd at that place. When I was up this morning they'd left a good yellow furry coat hanging out over the back of a dogcart, and Fancy Naylor's white jennet was chewing the sleeve off. It was a good thing you left them, Colonel, and go now to the Williams'. There were letters, too, falling out of the pocket of the coat. Wasn't my business. What's

that, Lancelot? You can't come to the train, you've forgotten an appointment? I'll see to Miss Adair, then."

"But when," said Kitty severely, as they walked up the town, "did you find time to go and look at any jennet eating anyone's coat?"

"I only meant to see you off myself, and I know Lancelot is crazy over that yellow coat," said Costello meekly.

Miss Adair bit back a smile with great difficulty.

"And about that car," said Mr. Moroney, as he put Kitty into her carriage, and placed a bundle of picture papers beside her, "I think the maker was a bootmaker myself."

"A—what?" said Kitty. "Bootmaker?"

"You get such fine walks home when it stops," said Moroney gravely. "Let that car alone, Miss Adair—it might be worse than Timsy's black mare."

CHAPTER V

"**B**EFORE you'll know whether or not," observed Mrs. Cafferty, "that young lad 'll come here to sthay with us."

Honora Madden examined the latest brute dealt by the red cow and snorted sharply.

She would not hould, she observed, with the Quins makin' lodgin'-house keepers of themselves, so she could not. "Nice work for yerself Anne, to be beatin' eggs and slappin' cakes for tins of the gantry, an' cookin' them bits of chops they fancies. I was kitchen girl above at Lady Mulcaher's onst, with the pyates med a fright of smashed up slammy-like, an' the curries, an' the grandther. Tired ye'd be, Anne Cafferty, at it all."

Mrs. Cafferty's bright little eyes were dubious. She was a born cook, and had lived in good places as a girl.

"Creina'd be over to lend a hand most days," she said; "herself an' Nora Casey is not too great these days; for Nora is makin' up the match with Timsy, an' Creina is not for it, at all, at all; for all knows her heart is set on Matty O'Neill."

"With but two cows an' the ind of his house down." Honora was no romancist. "There's a fine slated roof to Henessy's, anyways, an' sure she won't know whether 'tis Mat or Timsy in two years' time, but that's the way of thim gerrils. Ye couldn't make

them see how there isn't a ha'p'orth of difference in any man onst ye have to be doin' for him an' his childther."

"Timsy's a wasthrel, anyways," said Mrs. Cafferty dubiously. "He has the good farm ruined; if he put the dandy green coats on his fields insthid of on his back his cows'd know the differ."

Honora agreed, with emphasis.

"Isn't me own little cousin, Mary Kate Madden, gerril above there, an' ye should hear of the nonsense within. Mustn't she whip the cover off the mate at dinner an' tell them it's sarved, the very same as if they was kings an' jukes, an' blind at that? An' she havin' to trapse around with the bit of cabbage on a dish and hand it. An' they scoldin' her if she does it wrong. A kind of puddin', no less, to folly, so as to make more grandther of it. She'd be wore out long ago if she hadn't a boy there workin' at the horses. An' she tells me mustn't she brush Timsy's soots, no less, and lay polish on his boots, or he whips the face from her. An' he has as many ties, she says, as'd hang a man if they were tied together; and a couple of collars away ivery week to the stheam laundry in the city, not trustin' Mary Kate to put a gloss on thim same. D'ye tell me now that poor Creina'd be up to all that boastin' an' pretence?"

Honora rose slowly. It took some time to get her bulky form upright.

"Isn't that what she'll be there for, to knock Timsy into sinse?" she snorted. "Isn't he poll bare now to the new young lady at the hotel, when he sees her, an' asking them to tay in the parlour, with gran' cakes, an' sliced bread and butter? That Timsy'd sicken cats. If he gets a notion in his head for thim above

him he'll be bate out altogether. An' the masther," she looked about her, "goin' off to Austrayley, in the spring, an' leavin' Creina with on one to fight for her."

Mrs. Cafferty's face changed. The way was long for the ould, she averred, an' she hoped God might send that Andy would not sthay out there himself.

"But his mind is sot on it these years," she said. "Often he towld me of it. How he'd niver rest till he saw herself's grave, an' the little one's."

"The great kind heart that's in him," said Honora gruffly. "He niver has forgot."

"I have the red cow sold," said Andy's voice at the open door. "Mary Jane Crehan had a wish for her, an' so I let her go cheap. She says she'll have you down in a week's time, Honora, to show you how quiet she'll have her milkin'."

Honora, crimson as to complexion, said, "Maybe 'twould be to show her bruises Mary Jane'd be doin'." She was almost minded now to suggest keeping the red cow.

Andy went into the little sitting-room, where the peat fire burnt warmly. Outside clouds were gathering leadenly, heralding a downpour, and the sough of a driving wind shook down the leaves. They came whirling drearily, poor relics of a short life, driven to corners where they would lie in sodden masses; whirling across the little lawn, dancing their death-dance on the grass.

Old Marty, slouching in, reproved his step-brother for leaving the porch door open, and cast bitter words of abuse at the leaves.

"I having the beds raked an' tidied, an' they a show on me now," he piped.

A wizened, cleanly old fellow, preserved in tobacco smoke; absolutely penniless save for what Andy gave him; he was a legacy from Andy's mother, who had been a widow when his father married her, and Irish fashion grudged nothing. Very old now, he worked at his flowers and grew vegetables in the garden.

He was wistful to-day, in bad spirits; they would be empty days when Andy was away; when there was no one to talk over the spelt-out newspaper with; no one to discuss the murders and the fights of the guardians and the members; no one to remember when Martin had been young and had ridden horses in the Hunt Races. It was in one of them he had got the fall which had shortened his leg and made him partly a cripple.

Martin's ways had not been altogether those of the straight path. There was a certain pony race often remembered, which he talked of proudly when he was in a good humour.

"Mike Doolans had it in his pocket," he would say, "with the little race mare that never grew, and he havin' the stewards squared an' all. Wasn't he goin' round with a grin on him, for they was to talk a lot of Mollie, a grey belonging to Spillane, an' she was to be med favourite with a few shilling on her to get the bookies to do it, but Caulfield's brother had a pony, Brown Bee, a brown, an' he asked me to ride him, an' I did. A nice little felly he was, but as to winnin' the race, unless all fell, she could not, an' so I told him. 'I'd hate that boastin' of Mike's,' he says, 'an' if this Brown Bee don't win it, another like him might,' says he. 'Ye'd never know.' So they all knew Brown Bee hadn't a chance, an' Mike was grinnin' at me the

day before, laffin' at me chance, we both bein' sweet on Costello's dather, that died that year. So up to the day of the race I knew nothin', but there was little Brown Bee ready, with his tail tied up and a set of bandages on him, an' rugs an' a hood, an' I might as well ride. We were measured whin the horses out for the farmers' race. I saw Mike Doolans take Mollie into a hollow place, and even then she was over fifteen hands. And I measured; there was no fear of mine; he was a rat. 'Come out here now, Marty,' says Caulfield, 'till we saddle.' He pulled the Bee into the shelter of a big hedge, away from the crowd, and beside him was another pony, and it rugged and bandaged, and its tail tied up.

" 'Run away in you, Marty, and weigh,' says Nat to me; 'we won't strip the pony till we can't help it; an' back yer mount,' he whispers. And he just winks at me, so that I knew there was something pleasant on foot. Well, I put all I had on me on the Bee at eight to one. The Doolans crowd were putting the crowns on as if the race was run, an' they called me a fool, an' when I came back ready I thought I was. Nat Caulfield slipped the clothes off the last minnit, and I nipped up. I teil ye I wasn't landed when I knew twasn't the Bee at all; this one had the spring of a racer, an' the mouth of one. He was two inches taller than the pony we had measured. I said nothin', as I was meant to, but I laffed to meself.

" 'I'll put the kettle on whin I gets in, an' have a cup of tea ready against the time *you* do,' says Mike, nasty like, to me, an' loud, because Mary Costello was lookin' on listenin'. 'Pride falls,' says I, not thinkin' of anythin' new.

" Well, we med off, and when I got the Bee that

wasn't the Bee together, I sat down to ride. I tell you it was pastin' that day. The little horse all but fell at the fence into the road, so I lay steady, about fifth. There was Doolans racin' Mollie away in front—a fine lepper she was; and just as I came by Clancy's big bank, I was near to fall, for I cot sight of Caulfield's boy makin' off home at a gallop, an' he grinnin', and he was on the right Bee. Then we wheeled around for home an' I closed on Mollie. If ye saw Mike's face an' the look on it when I come up!

" 'Name of God!' says he, 'when did ye larn him to travel?' And he spurred Mollie.

" 'Name of God,' says I, 'is it a hearse-horse ye are on, Mikey Doolans?' An' I med for the front.

" The Bee that wasn't the Bee laid himself out like one that would be laughin'. I just med a race of it so as to give the people a few yells. I weighed in smart as a bee meself, with Mike objectin' an' swearin' an' cursin' outside. But what could he say?

" 'Is it to give away my pony's pace I would?' says Mat, with a face on him like one of the saints. 'What I knew, I knew,' says he, 'and some of it you know now,' says he. 'Will ye lodge your *obbjection*?' says he, 'or will ye not? an' measure both agin,' says he.

" The stewards coaxed Mikey; he was staring at the little horse, and vowin' he was too big, but he could not say much about re-measuring on account of his own, and there was nothin' else. The Bee had a white hind leg, so had this one. He gave it up and went away.

" 'And now,' I says to Mat, 'what was I on?'

" 'Erin's Boyo,' he says, 'the little horse that beat

Sonsie at the Curragh ; he belongs to my first cousin, and I was tired out with Mike's boastin'. The Bee is away to England to-morrow to carry a child. They'll all be after him here, but I won't wrong any man,' he says ; ' they might get a queer fright when they galloped him next. Draw your money, Marty,' he says. ' I have a safe boy that will not say a word—me cousin's own son, an' I can trust ye too.' "

Poor old Marty never tired of this story ; saw nothing the least strange about it. He liked to have an audience for it. Father Con, or old Danny, and always Andy.

" It will be lonesome," Marty said, " when you are away, Andy. And here is Father Con up for a horse."

The rain was already spattering down, coming in unsteady jets and splatters. Father Con ran into shelter.

He was passing the end of the lane, he explained, guilelessly, " and saw the storm makin' up and came for shelter."

He sat down gladly to Mrs. Cafferty's bountiful tea, which included eggs and sticky jam and mounds of yellow butter and home-made bread.

" I was sayin' how lonely it would come when Andy crossed the seas." Marty trifled with a little bread that he might be ready for his pipe.

" You are set on it, Andy, then ? " Father Con looked at Andy.

" My life's wish, Father, comin' at last. There's some never gets that same, their life's wish," said Andy gently.

He had mated for love. There had been no arrange-

ment made between grasping parents when he married his lost Kate. They had loved each other tenderly, and when Katey began to cough a little, the sea voyage was to make her quite well and strong, though it put Andy heavily in debt to pay for it.

"It was her wish," went on Andy softly, "that I'd stand by her grave and say good-bye to her there where she lies." He pulled out the book he kept in the table drawer, never weary of wondering which great erection he would choose to put at his wife's head.

Father Con was for angels trumpeting to heaven. Marty fancied a kneeling, weeping figure, lamenting for the dead.

As the room grew thick with tobacco smoke, Andy talked on of the voyage, of meeting Katey's people, of showing them how well-off he was.

His heart and mind were full of his voyage: yet his joy in it clashed just a little with the fear of the work which he must leave to others. The meadowing, the potato digging, would be over before he came back.

"There isn't one of them," said Andy gloomily, "that won't stand when the sunshine's there, wondering when the rain will stop them. Not one but will save the horses, with the clouds all ready to come down. Marty must be abroad at it this year, watching the men."

Marty, wrinkling his old face, observed drily that much they cared for Marty.

"I could be at them in the four-acres, and they know it will take me an hour to get on to the High Field," he said. "Unless I'd ride the old pony."

At the word "ride" Father Con suddenly lost interest in Australia. He fidgeted on his chair and remarked that horses would blight you worse than workmen.

There was the black, now, with the cut festered and sore on him; no chance of comin' out for ten days or more.

"An' the hounds to me door to-morrow," mourned Father Con. "You'd think old Tim Molloy put off dyin' on purpose so that I don't have to bury him till next day, and no use at all to me now."

Andy's eyes twinkled.

"A bank country too," said Father Con, looking hard at the ceiling. "It would be an advantageous hunt now for the bay colt."

"It's walls he wants," said Andy with finality. "He's too good at the banks as it is. Couldn't you get O'Keefe's dun, Father? He can't ride him."

Father Con replied that the dun had a knee on him like a pillow, and the hands of man could not stop him besides.

"He bolted off in the side-car with Mary O'Keefe just up, and never stopped till he met the coped wall outside Mrs. Langford's gate with both knees: that saved him. I told them not to be wastin' him in the harness," said Father Con gloomily, "for nothin' built can knock him if you can keep him clear of hurtin' the hounds at the start.

"He is a rogue," said Andy sympathetically.

Old Marty mumbled "spurs" emphatically. "The only way to stop a puller bein' to let him off," he chattered. "Loose out the reins an' let in the spurs, an' with the dirth of surprise he'll give over to you.

If you pull at him that's what he's out for. There was Tearaway that I rode——"

They had heard of Tearaway many times. Father Con interrupted rather heatedly by asking if you could do that with hounds checked before you and the Master's eye like a knife under his cap.

"You can take him a course of his own," said Marty, with dignity. "Around the country. One hunt isn't the last you'll ride, and it's maybe well lost to teach a rogue his mistake."

The rain fell noisily, lashing against the window panes; the wind puffed in sharp gusts. Father Con looked regretfully at the fire, and rose to go. He had three miles to bicycle.

"I will be there in the morning," he said, "running the boots off me feet to see you goin' away."

"If you put on a pair of gaiters," said Andy, as Father Con got dejectedly to the door, "Father——"

"Gaiters!" said Father Con, with a light in his eyes.

"You could ride the bay colt you came over to look for," cackled Andy amicably.

A wide grin illumined Father Con's freckled face. His white teeth gashed it with a dazzle of joy. "That I came to ask for," he said, and then grinned again. "I declare to the heavens you'd see through a built stone wall, Andy," he said with a roar of joyous laughter. "I wouldn't say now but I had a thought when I came this way, but when you took the nose off me face over the banks, I gave it up. What time will I fetch him?"

"You should be here at six," said Andy. "This will be the last cub hunt."

"And I won't be botherin' you again," said Father Con happily, "for I have O'Keefe strongly advised not to harness work the dun when his knee is well, though there's none I'd as soon have as the bay," he added eagerly. "There's a lift in him, and a stride, and a bit of blood. My! but the rain is peltin' down. Father Canty is down at Casey's," he added, "to say a word to little Creina."

Andy's face changed quickly.

"It seems she has some wish for that Mat O'Neill, that has nothin' at all. And the Henessys are wishful to make up the match before next Lent. I'm afraid the girl isn't for it, and them sweet-lookin' ones are the hardest to manage when they take the notion."

Andy turned back to the fire. "She would have the poor husband in Timsy," he said to Marty.

"A fellow that, thinkin' more of his new gaiters than the hounds," mumbled Marty contemptuously, "with his hands above at his cheeks when he rides, and the horse's head pulled off whenever there's a big fence. An' the excuses of him in the English sort of a note he lays on his voice. 'Where were you, Timsy?' I says. 'I met wi-are, Mr. Crehan, above behind Maloney's'; or 'I was obliged to stop, Mr. Crehan, there being a youthful huntsman in difficulties and no other gentleman near to render aid, Mr. Crehan.' Restin' an' boilin' is all he keeps the horses for, and I'd say he has to float his heart upon whisky before he starts out at all."

"A poor match," muttered Andy, "and Mat a stout strong young fellow that doesn't touch a drop, and works late and early, but that Nora Dayley that married Casey was always ambitious.

She let the girl run wild, and now she'd like to see her in a feathered hat driven on a side-car to Mass."

"There isn't a taste of me dhry," said a voice at the door.

Creina's face, rain-spattered, glowing, was thrust in. She flung back her shawl from her sunny hair, threw the wrap aside, and came across to Andy. Something besides wind and rain had reddened her eyelids; her dark grey eyes were heavy with a child's boundless woe.

"I ran across to be out of the worry," she said, crouching close to Andy's chair. "They were at me, Uncle Andy. Mrs. Henessy was over and they in the parlour, an' they talkin' of cows and pigs and dhry money, as if there was nothin' else on the wide airth."

Andy's old hand fell softly on the curly, damp head. Creina was something like his lost Katey. He had petted and loved the child since she had been able to toddle. Creina had her own little farm given by Andy, a red calf which was now a full-fledged cow, two little pigs fattened and replaced as they were sold; odd, motherless lambs given to the "girsha" for her to bring up.

"They'll never make me do it," said Creina through her teeth. "'Tisn't even as if Timsy had a great wish——" She stopped abruptly. Timsy's gallantries were somewhat well known.

"Have you told them yet—of another?" asked Andy softly.

"Nothin' but what they're after guessin'," Creina said drearily. "I've come for the lind of a pot of jam, Uncle Andy, the tea waitin' on it for that. Mrs.

Henessy has an eye in him for what's missin', an' I must run back."

Mrs. Cafferty supplied a pot of jam, also sound advice as to sending one of the lads on such errands, but outside in the wet Creina listened and stopped. Someone slipped from the trees into the laneway.

"I saw ye crossin' over, asthore, an' I ran up."

There was no grandeur about Mat O'Neill. He was in his worn working suit; a big, merry-eyed young fellow, with an honest, kindly face. A strain of English blood in him had destroyed the philosophy of his race. He could not stand aside, see Creina bought and sold, and take it as part of the passing hours.

"Arrah wisha, Mat." A shy, wet hand in his, as they hurried down the lane.

"I seen the Henessys' side-car goin' up, Creina."

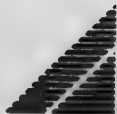
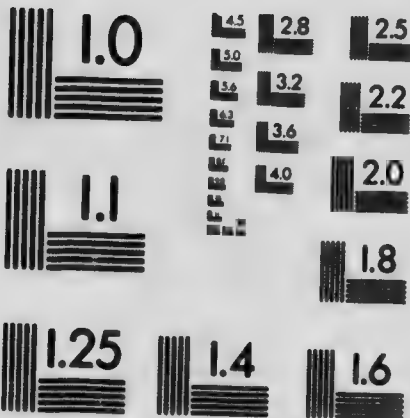
Creina talked as she hurried. "Ye might well have, for they were up there sitting an' planning an' not a 'with yer lave' or 'by yer lave' to meself. Pigs and cows," whimpered Creina, "that's all—what will go with me. Nothin' abait meself."

A gap in the thorns gave out on the wet fields. Across them they could see Mat's shabby little thatched house, crouching back among a few sheltering elm trees. He knew how he toiled on his bit of sour, marshy land, giving back what his father's hand robbed it of, making shift to drain the rushiest bits, tilling where years of meadowing had made the fields worthless. There was no money left to mend the crumbling outhouses; the new covering of golden thatch on the roof had meant the price of two yearlings. With a little capital Mat would have prospered; as it was he was working up slowly, winning



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way inch by inch. If no plague of sickness visited his stock, or no bad year came, he would have done better.

"It's poor," he said, pulling Creina to the gateway. "Not much against the slated house up beyant. An' the year came cruel, Creina. The rye-hay lost, black an' useless from the rain; the corn laid an' green in the ear: I got the worst price in the market for it an' paid the big price for the seed; the straw not worth cartin' in. An' now the turf—we couldn't save it with the wet—'tis but like clay on the fire for us. If it had all but come good, Creina, there'd have been a few pounds in the bank an' more cows in the fields."

It had been, as Mat said, a cruel year for the farmers. Andy had been of the lucky ones, saving his hay on the few dry days; his corn escaped being laid. Mat, on his low-lying marshy fields, had lost almost everything. He had put in young stock now to eat the hay which was too discoloured to sell; he had borrowed to buy them, the debt to be paid when he sold.

"But it's all improvin'," he whispered to Creina; "an' if yer people'd give me the bit of help an' yerself, little girl, I could get on yet."

Someone called "Creina!" shrilly. Mat slipped over the gate, diving out of sight.

Creina ran on. Her mother, a thin, elderly woman, was fuming at the door. Tea was stewing on the little range; Mrs. Henessy had said pointedly that she must indeed leave.

"An' not a pot of jam to lay oberight her," stormed Mrs. Casey. "Her that talks of three soorts of plummy cakes she lays out every afternoon. God save us,

Creina, was it the way ye losht yer feet on the way? "

"The jam delayed me; Anne had to look for it." Creina put down the pot.

"An' ye runnin' off yerself, with Peter and Con there outside, a shawl on yer head and yer feet soaked. Carry in tay, Josey, for the love of God. Mrs. Henessy is as black as ink inside."

Josey, a stalwart maiden, hustled the tea-pot and jam onto a tray, whispered to Creina that "she, as her name was Josey, she'd do somethin' wrong inside," and banged open the parlour door.

The Caseys' home was a strongly built farm-house, slated, its walls washed bright red. The parlour off the kitchen breathed forth the usual stuffy air of disuse and unopened window. A suite, purchased at some auction, rested against the darkly papered walls, until it was dragged to the middle for some guest to sit on. A bright red mahogany table had one end covered with a white cloth, on which two loaves of baker's bread, a bought cake, and the pot of borrowed jam, were now arranged.

At the head of the table, peevish for lack of tea, sat Mrs. Henessy, elegant but very business-like. In a black velvet beaded mantle, a round hat of an uncertain period, and a net veil with two holes in it. A pair of black kid gloves with the tips of the fingers drawn out lay on the table, by a leather handbag and a pocket-handkerchief with a mourning border.

"It's astonishing the way the kettle'd spite ye," Mrs. Casey apologized. "I was ashamed to kape ye waitin' all the time, but Josey here raked the fire away three times an' the water just singin'."

"Mother of Hiven!" murmured Josey to the jam pot, "an' it biled over twice."

"An' we blowin' an' Creina blowing, an' no good at all."

Here, Mrs. Henessy, fixing a displeased eye upon Creina, asked icily how the girl had got so wet.

"Runnin' out for han'fuls of sticks," interposed Creina's mother hurriedly.

"Oh, Joseph and Mary!—Hiven above us!" finished Josey to herself, waiting stolidly.

"The best of helpful gerrils Creina is," beamed Mrs. Casey. "In an' out she was. Josey! ye sthupid-head! where is the knife for the butter?"

Creina turned a lovely scarlet. She had forgotten to ask for the silver knife at Andy's.

"Miss Creina forgot it, ma'am," said Josey stolidly, "she did not carry it ho——"

Mrs. Casey's look cut the "home" short.

The hostess poured out black, bitter tea, and cut cake and offered jam. Eggs had been prepared, but were held back by Josey, who whispered that "she knew the gerril above at Henessy's, an' there was never an egg to the tay." A decanter of sherry flanked the feast.

"There's many things," observed Mrs. Henessy, languidly buttering a piece of bread, "that Creina'll have to be learnin' in her new position. Not to run wild without hats, an' how to serve out afternoon tea, the same as we always has it." Here Mrs. Casey reddened. Creina had turned white; she sipped at the black liquid in her cup, but ate nothing. Then, as if the girl were not there, the two mothers, their tongues loosened by hot sweetened tea, plunged into business.

"There should be four cows, Mrs. Casey, four—remember the position we're offerin'. Creina having two of her own you say, an' her father should give two. An' the money down—five hundred pound, her gran'-mother havin' left her three of it."

Creina's eyes were raised ; she had never known of this.

"To come to her if she married to plaze us," went on Creina's mother, with hurried lack of truth. "Not unless. It's in the bank on deposit these tin year, an' the receipt with Mr. Dundon. James was afeared to use her money."

"An' then a few sheep. Timsy is short this year. An' for us, we'll lay down five hundred for five hundred, an' the girl will be driven to Mass on her own car, not walkin' across the fields, an' she'll be a lady with two servants."

Annie Henessy alone knew where that five hundred was to be procured and shown. She knew someone who would trust her with it for the wedding so as to show money for money. Timsy would have been hard driven to find fifty pounds. He had raised all he could already.

"James says Timsy is not so great a farmer." Mrs. Casey took her third cup of tea. "If we lays the money down he would expect the place'd be improved an' stock put in."

Pride and sense fought a minute's battle before, in an audible whisper, Mrs. Henessy suggested that James Casey's advice would be more than valuable to Dromin. "If he'd buy a bit for Timsy and tell him when to sell. When Creina is above he'll have the right. Bein' so genteel," said Timsy's mother, bearing elegant again, "Timsy has social calls on him, so misses some-

times the attention he should give to his farm. Now, the cows an' all, as I said four, Mrs. Casey, ma'am——"

"James would be consulted about the cows." Nora Casey was shrewd enough not to be bustled. "There was no stress of haste," she said. Creina was but seventeen.

With the red blood drained from her cheeks, Creina listened. She was bought and sold, for so many cows, so many notes of paper money.

In her two years at her convent school, Creina had made a friend of an elder girl, who had read books, and told Creina tales of romance and love, and whispered of Faith and Constancy, and simple things which were not of Creina's life. So that Creina, coming back gladly to her country life, had no ambition for slated house and side-cars, but only for the bright-eyed boy she had lost her shy heart to, and for the right to share his struggling life. Creina was not afraid of hard work; she cared nothing for finery. The fear of Timsy as a husband stifled her with horror. She dreaded the stuffy, pretentious farm-house, with its outward show and hidden squalor; the thought of Mrs. Henessy reproving her for every breach of manners; of Grace giggling in her showy clothes; worse, of Timsy whisky scented, stupid; of a Timsy whom she could no longer run away and hide from.

Eating nothing, the girl listened to the two women as they discussed and argued.

"I would not say," Mrs. Casey put in, "that Andy Quin above might not give the gerril a nice present an' she marryin'; maybe a couple of calves that'd be akel to the cow ye're hankerin' afther, Mrs. Henessy, ma'am. He has the great wish for Creina here."

Mrs. Henessy rose to leave. She swept the crumbs from her shiny silken lap, and genteelly drew on the stiff gloves with the long flapping finger ends. She intimated that she'd be thankful for her car, for the night was with them, an' supper would be ready at Dromin.

Mrs. Henessy had not shown one jot of her eagerness to secure Creina for her daughter-in-law. She was too clever for that. She impressed the Caseys with their chance of good fortune, the uprise to their girl's position. Timsy, young, handsome, with his big farm, could pick and choose if Creina failed him.

"We could take Creina back from Mass a Saturday, on the cyar. Herself an' Tinsy would have plinty to talk about to ache other, an' there's hints I could give her. We had the gentry from Fenessy's to tea but a few days back," added Mrs. Henessy loftily. "The young lady an' Timsy is very great entirely. Is the man outside?"

Good-byes rendered with extreme politeness; a somewhat laboured clamber on to the rickety side-car, and Mrs. Henessy had departed.

Creina stood staring out into the dusk; the rain was lighter, falling now in sparse little drops, and the wind had gone to the west.

"Mamma," Creina looked back into the lighted kitchen, where her mother was helping to put away the best tea things, "Mamma, if another had five hunthred pound to lay down opposite me own—if another had—wouldn't he do as well as Timsy?"

"Take the jam and put it away, Josey," commanded Nora Casey, "an' don't bring yer stories of the mice to meself if the pot is empty. What's that, Creina? Another—where would another be findin' it? If it's

poor Mat ye're thinkin' of, five hundred pence would be what he'd lay down."

So far Timsy Henessy had quite hidden the tottering state of his finances from the public eye. People might whisper and suspect, call him extravagant, and know him to be a poor farmer, but no one guessed how pinched he was for ready money, and how old Tom Henessy's savings had melted as wax before a fire. Timsy hid his losses and made much of his sales. His mother knew how two whole meadows had been lost the year before because Timsy would not give help enough to get the hay in when the sun shone for a day or two ; how he took out the money to buy stock and came home with half what the land would carry, having kept the rest to waste ; how he was never in time at fairs. His only cleverness lay in doctoring up unsound horses and passing them on, but that is a food which grows bitter on the palates of customers, who do not come again for another bite of the same.

" But if—well, never mind ! " Creina pulled her shawl from its hook. She had eaten no dinner or tea ; she was hungry and miserable. Her wet feet could be no wetter ; she slipped past the ricks of oats and big haybarn of hay, and ran across the potato garden to a hole in the hedge through which she slipped into the field beyond.

Bars of light glowed now in the west ; the rain cloud was rolling upwards, ragged-edged, leaving clear washed blue to show where its shadow had lain. The glow of the sunken sun gave softly across the wet fields, the hedges standing in bars of darkness against it. Far away, the hills beyond the river plunged their crests into a stream of mist ; behind Creina, Ballinmena rose

in rotund nakedness, its plump cheeks scarred with carbuncles and spots of huge grey stones. The bog lands near the fox cover whispered mysteriously, as the evening wind stirred the coarse grasses and wrinkled the deep brown pools where the peat had been cut away.

Creina loved the smell of the bog ; the white airiness of the bog cotton ; the scent of the plumes of meadow-sweet and wild mint ; the spikes of the rushes ; and their brothers the bulrushes ; and the queer little ringed things in the water which they called "fairies' candles." She used to come down there when Andy cut his corcass meadow, hanging over the pools, crushing the mint in her hands, loving the wild softness of the bog with the misty hills beyond it.

There was no bog up at Dromin. High dry fields, and Cahervally town showing scarcely three miles away. It was ugly there, and dull. A belt of trees hid the mountains, another the view of Ballinmena Hill humping his plum-pudding-like self out of the flat.

Creina ran fast across the fields, for there was the forth to pass and the little people might be out there, playing, and bewitch her as she passed. She raced on as something tapped with a throb of fear at her heart. Was it the Leprachaun himself, mending his boots ?

Mat's house was sheltered by big elm trees, where a colony of rooks had bred. Creina ran through the muddy gap which led on to a narrow laneway. The half-door was open, a glow of light pouring out.

"Arrah, Creina, child !"

Mat's old aunt, who kept house for him, turned to the wide, open grate, where a bellows turned by a wheel could blow the peat into glowing gold. A kettle

swung on a sooty hook. Rows of old lustre mugs and brass candlesticks hung on a huge dresser caught rays of light ; behind them were the old blue dishes which Mat's mother and grandmother had used. There was no progress on Lisnaghy farm. The kitchen had not been altered or its wide chimney built in to hold a kitchener, but it was clean and restful.

The cottage was not small ; a parlour, never used now, opened off the kitchen ; its furniture, things picked up at auctions ; a bureau with latticed legs, a substantial table, and stout chairs, with the inevitable show of heavy glass decanters and glasses. The wide window looked onto a neglected flower garden, where the box edges to the flower beds straggled up from desultory clippings, and where sturdy old plants flowered on despite lack of weeding and looking after.

Creina wanted nothing more. No slated, two-storied house with " the room inside " made hideous by white antimacassars and Berlin-wool mats ; no attempts at gentility, but a home where she could work.

" Mat is outside." Anne O'Cloghessy looked up smiling. " One of the young calves is not too well in herself, the craythur. Will ye take a drop of tay, Creina ? "

Creina realized suddenly that she was hungry, and tired and wet. She watched the tea-cups being laid on the coarse white cloth, the bowl of moist sugar—a boy had had to fly to Cara for lump that morning to have it for Mrs. Henessy ; the jug of creamy fresh milk ; a three-legged oven standing in the embers gave promise of hot bread. Old Anne made her tea very carefully, heaping spoons of it into a big brown jug,

pouring on the boiling water, then straining it off into a hot tea-pot. The smoking soda loaf came out of the oven and was recklessly cut.

"I never knew how hungry I was," said Creina, with the sound of tears in her voice. "There was such granjer at home, Mrs. O'Cloghessy; tay in the white-metal pot, an' lump sugar, an' jam, an' all sot out in the room inside, an' with this an' that, I didn't taste a morsel."

"Faix, with this an' that," said old Anne shrewdly. "I knows, childie."

Mat came in, his rough coat glistening from damp. Scoldings might come with the morning, but Creina could not think of them now.

Mat wore no green clothes or red ties, yet he was cleaner than elegant Timsy. He had scrubbed his hard hands now before coming to his tea; he was big and so kindly, and the girl's heart ached horribly.

She must obey; it was the creed of her life. Her parents were all-powerful; yet the germs of rebellion strengthened in her childish mind. She would try not to marry Timsy.

Old Anne, mindful of her own youth, found some mysterious errand "in beyant," disappearing into her own room. She left Mat and Creina together.

Creina was quick to tell her troubles, to cry to the stronger being to save her.

"If ye had but five hundred pound, Mat, in dry money, 'twould be akel. Mamma towlt me that same, to-day. If ye had, Matty," she whispered.

"Five hundred pound!" Mat had toiled and improved and worked up, but to sweep his land bare of stock, to mortgage and borrow, would bring no good fortune.

He stood looking into the fire, his arm round Creina's shoulder.

"Ned Hanley towlt me to-day that there was a fortune in young sthock," he said; "the hay I have is no use to sell an' the roots is good. He said if I went to the auction an' bought I'd have a profit."

CHAPTER VI

KITTY ADAIR bought the American motor-car ; she took a drive in the vaunted Humber, which did all kinds of things it had never done before, and having blandly listened to all her host's assurances, Kitty went on and took the Yankee. It was a droll little car, of extreme hideousness ; it leapt into full speed with appalling swiftness to a novice, but after the manner of its fatherland it went. With the instructing chauffeur clinging to the brim of his cap, and some scant hopes of prolonged life, Kitty drove the car herself from the beginning. She knew how to steer, but she did not know how to manage the foot pedals, so that progress was curiously varied.

"Declutch, miss," wailed Mr. Heffarty, and Kitty flung in her side brake with a jar which shook the mechanism. She would call them all pedals, and she would not slow round a corner ; but she drove somehow, and she learnt somehow, so that after two days' private tuition she returned to Fenessy's driving the car, and instantly won promise from the already hard-driven youth-of-all-work there, to "care" it for her.

"The masther's trap can do along of the sick cow," he announced after some thought, "so there's the big house idle. Will ye dhrive her in, miss?"

To which Kitty replied firmly that if she did so she could not back it out ; so, having with great difficulty got the car out of gear, she was pushed in to stand

ready for the morning, just as Kitty's sister came tempest-like to express her opinion.

Madge Deane wished to know what Kitty wanted with a dreadful trumpery little car, and where she had got the money to pay for it, and why no one had been consulted . . . and several other things.

"It is not the least bit of use being rich when perhaps you may be dead," said Kitty, who was singing a song of memory lest she should forget how to start in the morning: "Declutch, pedal half away, side lever forward, pedal right out, then right up." And then went on crooning over the stepney.

"Not a bit," said Kitty, pausing in her hymn, "so I just bought this because I can play about in it; and I'm buying a horse too."

Mrs. Deane sighed deeply. "You will at least take my advice as to that," she said acidly. "There is a nice grey pony which came here to-day, which would carry you."

Miss Adair mentioned something which contained the words "ponies being sugared." She was to ride Andy's brown next morning.

The upper room at Fenessy's smelt of lamp oil and stuffiness when she went in. A crack of open window admitted a thin blade of evil-smelling draught. The table was being laid for dinner, and Vi'let, when she was not satisfied with the knives, blew on them, and then polished them with her apron.

Timsy's black mare was still sound on her doubtful leg. Mrs. Madge Deane spoke of her with rapture. Such a mover! such a galloper! They were really grateful to Mr. Henessy. And, by the way, he had asked them all to luncheon on Sunday, and it would be kind to accept the invitation.

Kitty thought that it might be quite a wonderful luncheon. She was so immersed in the new car that she forgot to shudder when boiled chickens in white paste were laid upon the table—chickens with all the softness in the sauce, and a yellow hardness of flesh underneath it.

Oliver Deane did not like American cars ; he said he knew all his time would be taken up in mending the rattletrap and trying to start it.

Kitty replied cheerfully that the man had put on something electric—an accumulative, she thought, which whirred and sang and then it went, so that was all right.

The meet next morning was the last before hunting began in earnest. It was not until half-past seven, and was at Brunatly, a series of straggling woods on the side of a slope. When the fern was thick there it held, but later, when the undergrowth died down, foxes were impossible to find, going out to the gorse-grown crags all round.

Kitty's brother-in-law took turns with Patsy in the morning until the car started, while Kitty at the wheel played excitedly with spark and throttle, advancing the former once so that a back-fire flung Patsy supine upon some boards, to be reproached by the new lady driver for his clumsiness. Finally, being quite uncertain of anything, Kitty pushed out her side lever as a last resource, just at the moment the car buzzed into life.

"That did it, that was stopping it," cried Miss Adair triumphantly.

Oliver Deane, from his back in the cow's bed, which had been hurriedly slung on one side by Patsy, groaned out that it was meant to. Kitty, when she raised her

flurried head from guiding the car through the door, looked back to see Captain Deane rising from malodorous wet straw, and Patsy's legs waving wildly from the midst of the loose boards.

"Be dam to them cranks of carriages," remarked Patsy, extracting nails from his suit, "that won't go at all when ye want them to, an' leps on ye for shpite whin they does."

Oliver Deane, encompassed with a great deal of straw, advanced to inquire icily if Kitty knew that she might have killed two people—that her car was in gear when she allowed them to start it, and if they had not flung themselves backwards they must have been badly crushed.

Miss Adair studied the side lever reproachfully; she said she thought it stopped the car going, and she promised never to do it again. "But—but——"

"And may I ask," said Captain Deane politely, "what you are laughing at?"

"I was only thinking," said Kitty unsteadily, "that you're so like—like—Ophelia—in hunting breeches. Come, Patsy!"

Captain Deane stood aside with considerable dignity. Patsy leaped into the seat beside Kitty; he was neglecting many duties to accompany her, and the motor wobbled deviously on to the road.

"For all the wurruld as if it had drink taken," observed Fenessy sourly. He objected to Patsy's loss.

Captain Deane brushed himself, and took out his own car, advising his wife to hurry if she wished to see her sister alive.

The morning was softly grey, amber glimmers in the east gave promise of fitful sunshine; the dying leaves

on the hedges were rain-drenched and glistening. Kitty forgot her ignorance as the cheap car spun over the stony road, gathering far too much pace for Patsy's comfort.

"If ye could but take a rake at her, miss," he suggested, when they grazed his old uncle's donkey-cart by half an inch, and all but wrecked themselves against the Dohertys' red cow.

Kitty worked her unskilful way on the throttle until she managed to find a niche which reduced Sadie to an easier pace.

The grey softness of the morning grew darker. A purple cloud flung down a sharp chill storm of rain. It fell just as they reached Brunalty and drove up to the gate where Andy was to meet them.

Luck carried Kitty to a safe stop, with her front wheels half-way up the grass at the edge of the road, but still safe. She turned the car off triumphantly.

Patsy, who was remarkably intelligent, slipped round to pull back the side lever, and put the car out of gear. He remembered the nails.

Andy's brown horse was led up and saddled. Kitty's heart went out to him as he nibbled in friendly fashion at her bare hands. She was no judge of horseflesh, but some instinct made her admire the strong, compact frame, the powerful hocks and sloping shoulders, and the lean, sensible head.

Timsy's black mare, already losing some of her bloom and fatness, was to be tried by her sister; Andy's showy grey standing beside it.

With pink cheeks and an excited manner, Miss Adair announced that the brown horse must be hers.

"I have got fifty pounds now," she said, "and I can pay the rest when I'm of age, or by degrees."

Andy's eyes twinkled good-humouredly. He was no driver of hard bargains.

"If you can manage him," he said, "if you can manage him, missie, but he's anxious—very anxious."

Kitty asked about what, and then turned a fiery eye upon Costello Moroney, who had laughed aloud—he said at something he had remembered. So Kitty melted to friendliness as they discussed her new toy—the car—listening almost humbly to advice.

"And I learn all the things off and they walk right out of my poor head," said Kitty sadly. "That lever now this morning, and poor Ophelia—all straws."

"Ophelia!" said Mr. Moroney.

"Well, not really—she was Oliver," explained Kitty lucidly as she landed in the saddle and rode off.

"Motor-car in her bonnet," observed Costello gloomily.

Hounds were already in the woods, drawing through the tall, yellow bracken; the small field was grouped waiting, the whips' coats making brilliant spots against the grey of the morning.

Ravager spoke to it; a wave of pied bodies broke down the fern as they went to the note. It was taken up, echoed until the wood rang to it.

Kitty, her face crimson with excitement, her eyes shining, crept close up behind the Master. The brown horse cocked his ears and stood trembling, longing for his hunt.

Harris's cap went up. Nat's seemed to copy the first whip's. Three fat cubs broke almost simultaneously, galloping off across the rough ground, outraged by this invasion of their home, looking for some of the holes which a thoughtful mother had shown them.

"And which—oh, which"—a hand gripped the Master's arm—"which will you pick out to run after?"

Mr. Knox Harding looked mildly across into an exceedingly pretty face close to him, then he coughed, because a little further off he looked into one with a murderous expression, and realized that it was set on Costello Moroney's shoulders. Derrick moved his horse on. He also winked at his wife.

"Oh, which? Do tell me, so that I can get on after it," breathed Kitty.

Old Ravager flung his powerful body over the low wall of the wood; the loose stones rattled as hounds dashed out, spreading out on the storing ground, noses down. Then Dragon had it, throwing his tongue as he dashed away. The cubs must scuttle hard now if they were all to escape. There is blood-thirst in a hound's note, blood-thirst in their wistful faces.

They settled on to one cub, the biggest of the three, running hard over big fields between the woods. The brown horse took complete but kindly charge of his rider; he galloped away temperately, his perfect shoulders carrying him without slip or stumble over the ant-heaps and moss-grown stones, and through the brakes of bracken. He swung over a low wall, with a kindly pause on landing for Kitty to get back to the saddle. Then for half a mile he could gallop, and he flung out to the right of hounds, his eyes on them, his ears up, white flakes of foam on his neck.

"Will she ride over them, Andy?" asked the Master anxiously.

Andy shook his grey head.

"He is learnt too well," he said proudly. "I rode

him half last year, but there's one who might," he added drily.

This one was Timsy's black mare, with her nose stuck straight skywards, coming at a shattering pace down a steep slope.

"She should be very hard to hold. She took Timsy over a big fence once," said Andy, with the twinkle deepening in his shrewd eyes.

Hounds checked when the cub had turned under a wall. They flashed over it for a second, and Mrs. Deane came handsomely through them.

"And he told me I could hold it in a snaffle," she gasped, as the mare steadied at the hill.

Andy's brown, already christened "The Treasure" by its rider, stopped at once when hounds did. Mrs. Deane turned and galloped the mare round the field to try to steady her.

They hunted on to the next wood, a big one, when the cub turned and twisted in the bracken, afraid to break again, and cheered by the presence of one of his family who also scuttled round seeking safety. A hard thing to find with the old hounds hunting steadily, and the eager puppie making the woods echo to their music.

Two new-comers had joined the chase—Mr. Timsy Henessy, on a long-legged, good-looking chestnut, and his sister, sitting crookedly on an iron-grey cob with fired hocks.

Grace Henessy's habit was of palpably local manufacture; its colour was a very bright blue; it opened over a canary waistcoat; and sundry brassy ornaments embellished her tie. She made a whistling noise between her teeth when she wanted to go on, accompanied by spirited chuckings at the reins.

Mrs. Deane, heated and exhausted, rode up to the mare's late owner to remonstrate with him for the hardness of the black's mouth.

Timsy was filled with penitence, but he was not Irish for nothing, and he had undergone a complete training in making excuses.

He supposed the mare lost her head with the joy of carrying a lady and one so light—Madge stood ten stone; he performed a juggling feat with bridles which resulted in the black mare finding a severe curb in her mouth, and he disarmed Madge's wrath completely, until she rode on with him, the mare sidling sourly against her heavy bit.

One of the cubs, now blown and weary, broke again, saw hounds between him and the woods he had come from, and turned towards the open country. The black mare flung her head about, but went more quietly, and was under control. They ran on, leaving the woods on their left, across a line of low stone walls, until a sunk fence, wired all along, barred the way.

The field divided. There was a gate at one end, and one could also get round through a farm-yard. Kitty, in the flurry, missed Andy; she found herself following a division through the yard. The brown horse pulled her a little in the crowd. As they got past carts and farm implements, and avoided astonished calves and donkeys, Kitty heard Timsy Henessy call to her.

"This way, Miss Adeer," he said politely. "This is the best way."

He led her to another gate which took some time to open, and, down a slippery path by a cabbage garden, to yet another at which he fumbled.

The fences were thick ; Kitty could not see, but she heard the uneven yap of hounds growing fainter and fainter. Then, by peering over the gate she could see them—hounds streaming along, little dots galloping stiffly beside and behind them.

"We—we—are left behind !" wailed Kitty.

"There is another gate in front, and then a boreen down right away to Clongowles," said Timsy. "There is terribly venturesome places down where they all are. Wasn't it well now that you follyed me ? for we'll be there before them."

"You—didn't—want—to jump the fences," shrilled Kitty hysterically. "You brought me up here to come round by locked gates on purpose."

"I tell ye, the dykes below'd swally ye, Miss Adeer," said Timsy, "swally ye. An' we'll be at Clongowles before the dogs. See now—watch the riders scatterin' ; and that place is as wide as the sea."

The horses, with the curiously mechanical look which distance lends to them, were pulled up before a high bank. Kitty could see them going up and down, then a man off, a group gathering and the whole field jumping in one spot ; and Kitty wailed again, because she felt sure that The Treasure would have jumped it so easily.

"'Tis wiser here," explained Timsy, scurrying down a rutty lane. "Come along, Miss Adeer. I knows every inch of this."

Miss Kitty Adair said something between her teeth. When the lane was barred by yet another gate, she swung the brown Treasure from it and was flying straight for a huge bank overgrown by trees and brambles, and with the tell-tale posts which marked wire running down its length.

Had not Timsy almost broken his vocal chords shrieking warning, Kitty must have had a bad fall ; as it was she came back to the laneway and followed Timsy along it, muttering sulkily.

Clongowles, the patch of gorse which the cub was making for, was to their right, and they probably would have reached it before the hounds if the weary cub had not been run into just beyond the wired fence.

"There now, the boteen'll take us straight on to them," beamed Timsy in triumph ; " an' I avoided all them treacherous places for you. It was a good open country, there's no man would face it quicker than meself, but here, with the bogs an' the wire, I tell ye the clatter of the hard road is an insurance to your life."

Kitty left him without a word. She rode up as the who-whoops were echoing, with her face set stormily, and her lower lip trembling.

"I was taken round all through gates," burst out Kitty tragically, " and missed all the fun, and had no practice jumping."

Andy asked if she had followed Timsy.

"For there isn't a short cut in the country-side that he doesn't know," went on Andy pleasantly, " that bein' his idea of ridin' a hunt. But there be more hunts to come, Miss Kitty, plenty more, and this one was no good."

Kitty went on to tell her woes to Mr. Moroney ; he was listening sympathetically, when the sound of Timsy's clear voice made them turn and listen.

"Oh, indeed, I did not come down across the bog, Mrs. Harding, for I had a young lady taken in charge ; and she being inexperienced, I had to deny myself on

account of her. If she had to get a fall on my account, ridin' after me, I would not forgive meself, Mrs. Harding."

Grania Knox Harding looked thoughtfully at Kitty. If the new-comers were friends of Timsy's, and rode with him out hunting, she felt she must wait before she was civil.

"Did you ever hear of what the country people call 'assurance'?" said Costello, grinning. "Timsy has a corner made in it. Follow me next time, Miss Adair."

"I shall not. I shall follow Mr. Andy," snapped Kitty. "He is much nicer than you are—he doesn't laugh at me."

They found again, and ran round the place, but a thoughtfully inclined covert keeper let his other cubs in so that the morning's hunt was over by ten.

Kitty got her car pushed back off the grass, and then asked openly for another road home, as she could not possibly turn round. Mr. Moroney offered to show her one. Patsy was sent back with Moroney's horse, and Mr. Moroney took a lift.

He only said, "There now!" as they got round the first corner with a spirited bang against a wall, but he kept his hands ready for a drag at the wheel in case of further emergencies. The road which they took led them past a high tumble-down demesne wall, great gaps where trees had fallen making breaches in it.

"To be handy when the hounds run through," explained Costello. "That's my place. Will you look—steady! brake! That's the low speed . . . you're puttin' on. Brake—"

Kitty braked with a jar, letting the car roar through an open throttle. They stopped by wide old iron gates, propped permanently open, some bars further

up on the avenue preventing the cattle from straying out.

The house stood at the end of the drive—a tall, narrow building, with neglect nosing up to its solid foundations. The skeleton of a fine conservatory leant against it at one end.

"That glass-house opened off the ballroom," said Costello philosophically, "but the last of the glass was lifted in last December's big gale, and it's like a wrecked ship's ribs on a shore this year. I believe in old times they had the Hunt Balls there, and sat out among the flowers." Moroney laughed. "I store my oats in the ballroom now," he said; "the roof's good, and it can be carried in and out through the old skeleton. It would take a lot of money to get the place together properly. Yet it's one to be fond of even as it is."

Kitty peered. A rushing little river brawled across the lawn, coming in a sheen of silver tangle out of an overgrown wood. Splendid old trees were dotted about, great dull-hued evergreen oaks, big beeches, sturdy elms. Someone had once spent money lavishly there.

"If you could come in to breakfast," said Costello shyly. "My aunt lives with me now, and there is always heaps to eat."

Kitty was hungry. She thought of the spread-out fried eggs at Fenessy's, accompanied by the stout pale slabs of bacon.

"Madge and Noll won't mind; they will only think I have driven you into something. I should love some breakfast," she said, and steered Sadie for the gate.

This she scraped through by half an inch, and lurched along the rutty avenue at a nerve-shattering pace.

"The swing gate," said Costello thoughtfully, "is not open. And we are running twenty-five. But I expect it would smash well. It's very old."

Kitty stopped with a jarring of brakes. There were rhododendrons near the house, and they were close now to the tumble of the little waterfall as it boiled over the slimy rocks.

"There are big trout below that," said Costello. "Mind the area—it's not fenced. Right—pull her right. You might have her down there for ever, unless she was small enough to put in through the kitchen windows. Aunt Eleanor, I've brought Miss Adair to breakfast."

A tall, grey-haired woman, hatless, stood on the steps.

"Miss Gore has also come to breakfast," she said—"How d'you do, Miss Adair?—Elaine, the smiling one. She says her horse went lame at the gate. Denny Mac says it went lame before it started, for it has side-bones as big as your hat; but anyhow, she's here. I'm so glad Costello asked you, Miss Adair."

The inside of Doonedurra was warm and comfortable. The hall was littered with whips and fishing-rods, but its dark walls were hung with fine old prints.

The room Miss Moroney took them into was shabby with much use—a room of faded tints, full of old mahogany and satinwood, with china which might have retrieved the Moroney fortunes heaped up carelessly in glass-fronted cabinets. Costello was fond of flowers: late roses were stuck into Worcester and Crown Derby vases; big bowls of mignonette, still untouched by frost, made the warm air fragrant.

Kitty said, "What a dear old room!" involuntarily. Then she nodded to Miss Elaine Gore, who was smiling

near the fire of logs. Someone had once told Elaine that she was like a bird ; so she always chirped and fluttered through life.

" Wouldn't it be rippin' if it was fixed up ? " she said. " One could make it quite lovely, with its outlook, too."

A gap had been cut in the woods outside, to show the hills—misty blue to-day—and another glimpse of the stream before it hid itself in the undergrowth.

" Fix it up, and ruin it, Elaine," said Miss Moroney quietly, directing a glance which lacked love towards Miss Gore. " You'd like nice, shiny chintzes and new carpets and curtains, eh ? "

" Yes, rosy ones," said Miss Elaine enthusiastically ; " and a white paper, all that old needlework covered up, you know ; and the china set out properly, and curio tables."

Costello came in ; it was completely evident as Elaine turned to smile at him that she was not without a thought of one day being able to arrange the room according to her fancy. She was a pinkly pretty girl, with teeth which demanded wide smiling, fair, fuzzy hair, and an emphatically babyish way of speaking.

She had left the hunt quite early, she said, with her stupid animal so lame, and she *hoped* it wasn't a nuisance, but she *knew* dear Miss Moroney wouldn't mind. And——

" Denny says your horse is only lame from those old sidebones," interrupted Costello. " So it's nothing to worry about."

Just then Kitty began to regret Fenessy's fried eggs. Elaine went on smiling widely at her host. She drew him to a corner of the long room, with the low-toned

murmurs and tossings of her head denoting an intimacy which the others were not invited to share.

Kitty talked to tall Miss Moroney, liking the sweet-faced woman better each minute.

"I used to hunt—yes." Eleanor Moroney turned her face away as she answered a question of Kitty's. "But I gave it up one morning—a morning just as this is——" Her voice trailed away almost to a sob.

Kitty put out a sympathetic hand instinctively. As she drew it back, blushing, the elder woman's fingers closed on it.

"Thank you, little girl," she said gruffly. "I'll tell you some day. Aren't you perished out there, Costello, away from the fire?"

"Miss Gore," said Costello drily, "is in an airy mood. She is taking a memory-picture of the hills, and is going to paint them. Breakfast—thank goodness!"

Elaine giggled consciously. She said: "Poor Mr. Moroney—go and get warm," as though she knew that heat of logs was as nothing to the light of her smile.

"I shall go and eat," said Costello, and he opened the door into the dining-room.

Someone had once said that the Doonedurra sideboard was a dimmed record of riches. It was loaded with old silver—cups and dishes and candlesticks; potato rings, epergnes; all crowded together and all yellow for lack of polishing.

Miss Moroney spent a day at them sometimes, but this desultory cleaning merely saved them from going black.

"And twice as much again locked away in cupboards," she said, seeing Kitty stare at the array. "If

you are fond of old silver, I must show it to you, Miss Adair."

Elaine looked with meaning criticism at the green fire-proof dishes on the heaters.

"If you used some of it, dear Miss Eleanor," she said, "it would have to be polished."

"Jane," said Miss Moroney carelessly, "has to look after this whole house, so I do not think she could to polish silver dishes for breakfast. Besides, I like fire-proof, Elaine."

They did not starve at Doonedurra. Jane had produced a breakfast which would have sufficed for ten men. Eggs had been fried and poached and scrambled. The dish of bacon towered streakily upwards. There were two varieties of hot bread, several sections of honey, and monster jars of home-made jam.

Kitty made moan over Fenessy's as she piled strawberries on to smoking scones. She had to talk to Miss Moroney because Elaine usurped Costello's attention completely. Miss Gore talked of gossip which Kitty knew nothing of; she reminded Costello of great hunts; and if his attention wandered she always required something to eat.

Kitty hurried away. She was very polite and graciously grateful to Costello, but she completely declined to take him on to Fenessy's. She assured him that she was quite safe alone, and in her complete confidence she tried to start the car herself.

"That comes of not retarding the spark," said Moroney, as he picked her off the gravel, whither the back-fire had flung her. "You'd have frightened the life out of poor Jane, if you had gone another foot and rolled down into the area."

Miss Adair, somewhat less confident, climbed dizzily to her seat ; she felt that the remark about Jane was heartless.

A smart little pony-trap drove up the avenue.

"Father has sent the man for the horse. I expect he guessed that I was here," said Elaine, running down the steps and smiling consciously with her head on one side. "And now, Mr. Moroney, you must drive me back and stay to luncheon with us "

"I'm sorry, but I have to go back with Miss Adair," said Costello, leaping on to the step as the car as it started. "I won't get out," he added to Kitty, in a fierce undertone.

CHAPTER VII

"CREINA, ye have flesh losht," said Mrs Madden severely. "Ye that was a fine lump of a gerril, an' there's not the half of ye there now."

"They have me worrited beyond," said Creina dispiritedly. "Haven't I a new dress now out of Hayes that I can't put me feet along the roads whin I'm in it, an' a hat with two rosies, an' yelly gloves to go up to Dromin on Sunday?"

Mrs. Madden scoured milk pans, and said severely that a slip of a gerril should be leppin' with delight to get so much grandjer.

"I have no use for grandjer." Creina took a lump of salt and scoured too. "Tell me now, Honora, whin ye were courtin'—her voice dropped—"did ye find it hard to choose?"

Mrs. Madden wiped her cleanly scarlet fingers on her apron, and looked interested. "Terrible hard," she said briefly. "Like a fool, me mind was set on Nick Barny, he was so great at a set, an' he'd dhraw music that'd make yer teeth grate from a melojon, but his mother, God rest her! was a graspin' ould divil, and so—there was Tom Madden along too—an' me name is Madden now."

"And ye fretted terrible?" Creina was hungry to hear of others' love affairs. "Did ye, Honora fret?"

"As I was tellin' ye, Creina—don't be bustlin' me—meself an' Nick was the two best on the boards at Moyalty races, an' he was the fine cut of a boy with a red face on him an' a good hearty laff, an' Shrove bein' close we thought 'twas all settled, but the two geese——" Honora sighed.

"Well?" said Creina.

"The geese settled it," said Honora. "'Twas all med up, and mamma didn't begrudge me the two bags of feathers, an' the third smallest of the pigs, an' four pound she had in the thatch, but that ould Mary Barny, God rest her—the grasping skinflint—was talkin' about the place that Nick had, an' the nate house his masther gave him, an' so the two ould women fell out over the geese. For Mary Barny wouldn't have it a match unless he had the pair along with me, an' mamma had sthore sot on the grey gandther that she had three year. An' with this an' with that, when I come home afther the races she had it althered an' all fixed with Tom Madden, that was workin' here, for Tom was lookin' for a wife to live in the little new house the ould masther sot to him, an' geese or no geese was akel to him. There was the ways of it," said Honora, "himself an' meself were called the next Sunday, an' I niver had the time agin for another set on the boards at any races."

"An' ye were miserable like," whispered Creina, "me poor Honora."

Mrs. Madden laid her scoured par on the shelf.

"Arrah! miserable is it?" she said indifferently. "I declare to ye, Creina, afther the first vexation I niver thought which was which. Tom was a decent hard-workin' man, an' we reared three an' buried two, an' Nick got fond of the bottle afther he married Biddy

Cafferty, that had a sharp tongue in her mouth. An' mamma gave me four goslins the next year, God bless her ; they was an income to me ever since. An' now, sure, Tom is gone an' the childther old, an' mamma livin with me, an' one day I'll be gone meself an' there'll be the ind of it. If I didn't have Nick at the alther I wore me puce dhress just the same, Creina. Nick had a wish for puce so I ordthered it."

Creina sat staring at the pans of yellow cream. Honora Madden was not comforting, or romantically inclined.

Would flashy, overdressed Timsy ever be the same to her as honest-eyed Mat? Creina shook her head violently.

"It is bettther," said Mrs. Madden, fixing a shrewd eye on the girl, "to lave nonsense to thim that has time for it, Creina, love. Well an' all for the quality sittin' above in dhrawing-rooms to be choosin' an' pickin' what they'll sit with, them same havin' too much time to be lookin' at ache other, but when ye're racin' to light the fires an' have all done be six o'clock, an' there's only Sundays . . . an' the week's mendin' to get through then . . . to be thinkin' on, isn't one man the same as another, an' their childther all alike, our own to be workin' for an' lovin'——"

Creina merely sighed again ; she could not school her mind to philosophy.

"It's them gran' schools that gives ye the ways of the quality," Mrs. Madden grumbled. "Will ye run for a kettle of bilin' wather, asthore, for me, an' tell Mrs. Cafferty to let me know if there's extry buther wanted this week the same as last ?"

Creina went dully, no spring in her young feet.

She met Andy in the yard coming in from schooling a three-year-old, a big, slashing bay, tied up and driven in long reins across the banks, for Andy held the theory that unless a horse could get off his hocks he would never make a hunter.

"Take them to small places at first," he would say. "Don't frighten them, but make them do it *right*. The horse that's taught loose is the horse that'll run loose in many a hunt, with you trailin' after him through the country."

"Well, Creina, girsha," his old face lighted up as he saw the girl. "What ails you, little one, that ye're downcast?"

"Botherations, Uncle Andy."

Andy knew; he laid his thin hand on the girl's arm, taking her with him into the house, into his little sitting-room.

"Tell me, Creina; a sorrow told is half killed they do say."

Creina told in part, and shyly, of Mrs. Henessy's visit and the traffic and talk.

"An' Timsy to lay down five hundred pound," she said drearily; "so he is, five hundred, in dhry money."

Andy whistled softly.

"An' if—another—had that same, mamma said it would be alike," faltered Creina, "an' Matty, he was driving to the town, an' Carey toul't him there is a fortin in young cows to sell in the spring; so maybe," Creina blushed, her sweet face half hopeful, "maybe it might come right."

"There's little security in borried money," Andy said slowly, "but little, me dear. He would go to the Counsellor likely. He is thinkin' of tryin'?"

Creina nodded. The Counsellor was a retired barrister, a tall man with red cheeks and a genial expression; a friend in need until he wanted his money back, and then it often went ill with the borrower.

"But an' he med it, Uncle Andy, an' he had the money, then mamma would let me off. She said so, an' I toul't Mat."

"Can't ye stand up, Creina, an' say 'No' once for all to Timsy, girsha?"

"If ye had my mother for a wife——" began Creina.

The fall of Andy's expression was as that of the barometer before a cyclone.

"An' she naggin' an' talkin' an' scoldin', ye would marry lame Padesheen himself to be away from her," exploded Creina. "Times I'm thinkin' of runnin' off back to the nuns to be a lay sisther there. I have no vocation for the religion."

Andy patted the girl's shining hair. "When I courted me our Katey," he half whispered, "I stuck to her, Creina, though I was but the poor match for an O'Shaughessy. I will be far from ye this summer, child; away where she lies," his old face lighted up. He chatted on of the great monument he would get put up, and how he would see Australian farming up the country, and he forgot Creina's troubles.

"Where the sheep do be in droves of thousands," said Andy, "an' rabbits the same, an' all the men brown as berries an' thin as rakes. 'Twill be a great change for me, Creina, lovie, out there; there's many a queer little thing I might bring you back, fur skins an' birds an'——"

"Creina—Ca-e-sey! Cre-in-a!" wailed a furious

voice outside, "is it boilin' the house or the kettle ye are, an' I sthuck to the flure waitin'?"

Andy went to the small window looking onto the yard; a large and aggrieved female was rolling towards the kitchen.

Creina, looking about her for a hiding-place, said the face'd be whipt from her for forgetting.

"Are ye there with that kettle, Creina Casey?" demanded Honora at the kitchen door.

"She is not, but in with the masther," shrilled Mrs. Cafferty's thin voice, "talkin' of rabbits an' clouds of sheeps, an' Austraylie, an' the kittle I have on is to wet the tay with, Honora, so it's kittles where are ye till it is wet."

Honora wondered wrathfully why any sensible man would look for a gerril, and mildly asked for the next hot water. She was not resentful.

Andy's eyes twinkled. "Rabbits an' clouds of sheeps," he chuckled. "When the hay is tossin' here, ye can think of me out there, Creina, in their cold weather. It's not many of us get the dream of their life, but mine is near to me now. April I'll sail, when the sea is calm."

Andy was as a child thinking of his voyage, of life on the big liner, where he had been assured there were even cricket grounds an' gardens of greenery. First class he was going, he said, to see it all.

Creina wandered home presently, past the covert, where Mat was at work building up a bank. He was happily excited, full of rew hope.

The Counsellor had agreed that there was great money in young stock. He was willing to advance money on them, and arrange with his cousin the auctioneer.

"So I am off in to the sale Satherday," said Mat; "an' who knows, Creina, if ye hold them off till afther Shrove, but I can lay down what Timsy can? An' where he'll get it few knows."

Ballinmena had another visitor that night: Kitty, driving her American car, and eager to complete the purchase of the brown horse.

"The greatest duck of a dear," said Kitty, "so I must have him."

With a patient twinkle of humour, Andy parted with his brown for fifty pounds and a completely unbinding promise of seventy more when Kitty had it. He listened also to sad wailings as to Fenessy's, where Kitty was quite sure she would eventually starve to death, or be smothered in dust.

Andy smoked thoughtfully. Mrs. Cafferty had twice urged upon him that he might lodge the quality snug an' simple, an' plaze the young lady that was so sot on the place.

After a heated wrestle with the starting handle, due to the car not being switched on, Kitty managed to circle round the yard with no further accident than driving over one of Honora's milk pails, and to get round the turn on to the lane outside.

Here she did not seem surprised to find Mr. Costello Moroney looking at a punctured bicycle; she had passed him as she turned in.

He stopped Kitty. "I can't get it done," he said; "so if you could drop me at Fannstoun Cross, I'd be very grateful. Hold on there, this isn't the way."

"It will have to be a way without a go-back in it," said Kitty firmly. "Corners are bad enough, but I cannot turn round yet, and I won't try."

"It will be eight miles then," said Moroney very cheerily. "Not much need to learn, is there? One can always go on and get round."

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Sunday was a day of light winds and pearly lights. Grey puffs of cloud slipping in silver softness across a pallid sky; deeper grey but pearly still, with faint touches of darkness they lurked on the horizon; the hills were softly shrouded; the greyness was without chill, tender as Ireland herself. There was hint of sunshine behind it, glance of silver sheen in its lights. The hedges flared against it, bronze and scarlet and gold and green, studded with bunches of unpicked sloes.

Kitty liked a walk across the wet fields, with the soft wind in her face and the wild distances of the western world before her; with the little farms crouching here and there, mere islands of habitation on a sea of green. But reluctantly she yielded to persuasion and said she would partake of lunch at Dromin.

"They were so kind; they sold me that mare so cheaply," Madge urged. "They'll ask where you are, and there's only cold chicken for lunch here."

"Patsy says her foremost back tendon is like an air-ball this morning," returned Kitty gloomily; "the black mare's, you know, after the hunt."

Mrs. Deane treated the matter as a mere knock which would go down with work.

"I saw Greece and mamma at all the shops yesterday," went on Miss Adair. "They were buying some sheep in one—dead ones, you know; and tomatoes and jams, and dish papers in another. Greece said she

wanted the lacy things you'd read of to go under bits of food ; I heard her."

Dromin, meanwhile, seethed upon a fire of preparation for its guests. Dust was wildly disturbed by flapping cloths ; oddments were thrust behind cushions and into corners. Grace wrote out the menu in clear print so that Mary Kate would make no mistake as to the order of serving. But as they drove to ten o'clock Mass Mrs. Henessy wailed in dismay.

She had asked Creina Casey up to spend the day, and it had gone clean out of her head with the buying and the floostering and all, and now what was to be done ?

Grace, after an echoing shriek, remarked that they were roined. Shy Creina could not, must not, come to sit at table with the quality. Creina, who would eat the mincy bits of meat with a knife and fork, and maybe lift the salad with a spoon. Creina, who was only a little country girl.

"Turn about the car and belt to Cahernane," commanded Grace ; "when Creina does not see us at Ballinmena she will never face the walk on, but will make home."

Creina, her gentle prettiness shadowed by the flopping hat, and her limbs cramped sorely in her new skirt, was forlornly alone at Mass, for her mother had not been well enough to come out. She looked round, wondering why Grace and her mother had not come, and if she might escape and go home again.

But, patiently fearful of offending the Henessys, Creina merely sighed and started for a three-mile walk along a muddy road. She took no interest in the pearly silvery greys flitting so softly in the sky, for her skirt caught her at every step, her hat

wobbled on to her nose, and her new shoes were too tight.

Fortune, in the shape of a motor-car, came upon her, as she hobbled on. Kitty Adair stopped to pick her up and drove her on to Dromin.

Grace Henessy was delivering a last medley of directions to her bewildered maid-of-all-work, when the car stopped with a jerk outside.

"Ye'll dish them mincy fish things on the parsley, Mary Kate, an' fry the chops golden—there's the book—*golden*, Mary Kate: don't spare the lard in the pan, and don't darken them. An' Holy Mother above us, if it isn't Creina Casey in the mothar-car an' there is Timsy out to them."

Grace said several other things as she flung off her apron and rushed into the parlour. Here a fire was destroying the nests of several pairs of "da-as" and smoking pungently as it did so.

"Greece," breathed her mother's voice. "Gre-ace! Be away quick to have your hat on, the same as if you were picking posies."

Miss Henessy did an uphill gallop to her room, where she hurriedly flung on a hat with feathers on it, tore the leaden curlers from her hair, and dashed breathlessly downstairs again.

"Greece," said Mrs. Henessy to her guests, "is away looking at the flowers. She will be in now any minnit."

The imposing hospitality of Mrs. Henessy marred all geniality. From the first minute the luncheon party went heavily, and with smarting eyes. Creina sat herself unhappily on the sofa, where her new shoes below her tight skirt seemed to appal her with their size and yellow lustre.

Mrs. Henessy skimmed lightly over sporting and other subjects; she also regretted her past several times.

"Before I came to be a farmer's wife," she said pathetically, "I had time to read all the fashions, but with the servants to look after it's not often I lay eyes on one now. Not bein' one who does work herself," went on the hostess pleasantly, "it's better for the few pounds it costs, to keep a good cook that'll see to all."

Mrs. Deane agreed languidly; her eyes wept and she was hungry.

"Miss Greece," said Mary Kate's voice at the door, "is the egg and crummys for the cutlets or for the sweet? It is all gone out of me head. Or if yer mamma'd come——"

The rush of Mrs. Henessy to the door was followed by hurried ejaculations of alarm from Mary Kate.

Ten minutes later she appeared again, resplendent in cap and apron, to announce that the dinner was at the table, a blighting glance changing it to "the lunch, I mane," just too late.

The dining-room opened off the other; its one window looked onto the yard so that the tightly-pulled muslin curtains were not to be regretted. It smelt of damp, of disuse. A pot full of paper flowers made by Grace ornamented the centre of the table, and further there were a large cake, a dish of oranges, and another of crab apples.

Kitty began to wonder what manner of people she had come among.

Creina came shyly and heavily to this grandeur. The thought of it occurring every day appalled her. In her own house the table-cloth was white and the blue

china shone, but they sat comfortably in the kitchen, with for food a big heap of boiled potatoes facing a piece of bacon and cabbage.

Mary Kate brought round fish. It was elaborately done up in paper cases and it tasted heavily of sc. r cream and onions.

Creina stared desperately at hers, furtively watching Kitty, seeing that young lady, after a taste, cunningly smash the fish about her plate and leave it. Creina did the same, but clumsily and openly, so that Mrs. Henessy glared at her.

Following the fish came a pause—filled by conversation—until a dish of cutlets, dark brown in hue, were brought forth apologetically by Mary Kate.

"I hardly like to give them the dip in the fat and not a golden yelly would they stay," the damsel confided to Miss Henessy in what she believed to be an undertone.

The rawness of the chops bore witness to the transient dip; it was only by skirting round the outsides that they could be attacked at all, and the blue pieces hidden under mashed potatoes, while Mrs. Henessy languidly feared the "outree" was a trifle rare.

Conversation languished through a long interval. A bottle of black ink, called claret, and some whisky, were offered as drink.

After another pause, two noble chickens, smothered in parsley sauce, and a ham made entry, accompanied by salad.

Kitty was hungry; she attacked her chicken pleasantly. It was, therefore, unfortunate that Mary Kate had emptied the sweet custard for the trifle over the fowl, and the ham was rawer than the cutlets.

To endeavour to be politely conversational with the blend of vanilla and hot fowl upon your palate is a strain upon the highest breeding.

Oliver Deane grew recklessly confused in his answers to Timsy concerning polo ponies. Mrs. Deane looked as if she might possibly be ill, and Kitty ate a potato resignedly, endeavouring to keep it away from the sweet sauce.

Through it all the magnificent Mrs. Henessy appeared quite unconscious of any mistakes. She ate the chicken without appearing to notice, and Timsy swallowed heroically, with sublime faith in his sister's cookery. He constantly pressed more food on his now weary guests.

"Another little taste, Miss Adeer. Just a tiny slice of the breast. My! but you don't pick a bird's share, and we afraid we would not have all you were used to. An' Creina too," said Timsy, looking at his silent fiancée, "leaving her good leg."

"I do not like the quare sweet sauce on it," said Creina shyly.

At this remark poor Grace, who had declined chicken, turned a fiery scarlet as she realized what had occurred.

"Salad," said Mary Kate, handing the bowl.

The salad was temptingly decorated with egg and radishes. Kitty took a mouthful and wished civilization had never been, just as Timsy leapt up with a pained roar.

"My Laws—Almighty! what is in the salad?" he bellowed, as he rushed from the room. He returned, looking painfully at his sister. "Excuse me! But my laws! it was pison—it might be serious," groaned Timsy, smelling at the contents of the glass dish.

"What pison is in the house, mamma? Is there any for the rats?"

Mary Kate, summoned urgently, was sulkily reticent. She had mixed 'le an' cream an' sugar, as Miss Doatie had bid her, an' she'd take her dyin' oath to that.

A rush for the bottle caused Timsy's complexion to alter. It appeared that he had broken his bicycle lamp the day before and poured the oil into the first bottle he saw. This, Mary Kate, in her hurry, had mistaken for the salad oil, and used it lavishly.

"The heart'll break in me trying to remember all," sobbed Mary Kate as she went out from the babel of comment. "Ile, an' the crame—an' wrong again."

Through it all Mrs. Henessy was quite unmoved, and presently, across another stretch of time, loomed roast pheasants and bread sauce, and following them a trifle, fierily bewhiskified, but with the chicken's oniony white sauce lurking chastely beneath its ornamental dotting of preserved cherries; and then a large jelly, pairing with something which had not baked.

Kitty felt as if she wished never to see food again. The room was intolerably stuffy; there was none of Andy's pleasant hospitality, but this forced and interminable attempt at display. Creina's widely opened eyes were dim with tears. She was terrified by the idea of spending two hours at dinner every day. She did not know how to eat her dishes or when to use the spoons and forks hot from the basin at the door.

And the sweets did not finish it. A savoury of stuffed eggs, their centres leaping in scarlet brilliance from their whites, appeared, and was handed round.

Creina grew suddenly interested ; she followed the progress of the eggs until one was handed to her, and then she wished eagerly to know the breed of him that laid eggs with thim quare-coloured yolks, for she was wishful to get one.

"Do not be foolish, Creina," said Mrs. Henessy acidly, "showin' yer countrified ignorance on us." Creina blushed painfully.

"I wouldn't say now," Mrs. Henessy added playfully, "but that this is the first reg'lar luncheon Creina Casey ever sat down to; an' isn't it grand, Creina, to see what's proper?"

"I would be very tired waitin' for it to be over," said Creina simply.

Captain Deane's cough to cover his "By Jove, quite right!" was clumsily done.

"But it was fine, an' quare," went on Creina sweetly, being anxious to please "with the sweet on the chicken, and the whisky pie an' all."

"Ye ignorant child! . . . We will take our tea," said Mrs. Henessy coldly, "in the drawing-room. Timsy, the door for the ladies."

Timsy gallantly proffered thin and evil-smelling cigarettes. Madge Deane, who was endeavouring to keep awake, took one of her own.

The smoky heat of the sitting-room completed sleepiness. Kitty saw Mrs. Henessy loom gigantic, and then fade away; the splendid bejetted bonnet rose in jerks before her blinking eyes; across an abyss of sleep she found herself answering questions foolishly, until the desire for fresh air became absolutely imperative.

Creina, frightened and unhappy now, crouched in a low chair. Every fibre in her being revolted at the

idea of living in this house. Timsy had hardly spoken to her. She was a nobody, an outsider, who could not talk in fine accents or eat her food properly. Even if there was no great luncheon party, she, Creina, would have to come into this dreary sitting-room to share it with Grace and Mrs. Henessy, to receive guests there, a mere no one—only Timsy's wife.

Her fidgeting fingers pulled at the sofa cushion, and rolling it to the floor disclosed an old blouse and a pair of stockings tucked away beneath it, a darning-needle thrust into the stockings.

Creina knew she had offended again. She shrank back from a fiery glance. No one noticed her, and she slipped out.

Mary Kate was dining among the debris in the kitchen—such a kitchen! Of piled-up untidiness; of dusty corners; and unpolished china. The whole house offended Creina. Her own was kept clean; the little chickens might sometimes feed on the kitchen floor, or a brood of fluffy ducklings come pattering in; but the brasses and china shone; there were no corners, no pretences. Creina left weary Mary Kate alone.

"Creina—I have been fast asleep." Kitty Adair slipped out to where the girl stood at the front door, looking drearily across to where the brown bog crouched below Ballinmena Hill.

"I would rather be sleepin' than awake here," said Creina. "There is Mr. Moroney away down the road off his bicycle, an' it punctured. Maybe he'd want a lift home—he is at the wheel of it."

"Mr. Moroney's bicycle," observed Kitty, "must be ridden on tyres made of canvas. I shall drive *you* home, Creina."

Creina said the fields were aisy walkin' ; and Mr. Moroney commenced to wheel the disabled bicycle towards them.

"He will surely be wantin' a lift," said Creina, smiling.

CHAPTER VIII

FENESSY'S HOTEL hummed to the bustle of preparation. Men polished horses, rubbed frantically at bridles, swore, as they rushed to do several things which ought to have been done two days before and were now crammed into one feverish hour.

"Did ye not dhry the bay's brushin' boots, Mike? God help us, make in an' lay thim above on the bars of the range. The face'll be whipt from ye if the lady gets them damp. Oh, God help and save us! —there's the Captain's sphurs on the bran bin, an' they never to inter me head since I gave the horses their mash a Sathurday, an' it's thim same his bawlin' for now."

Patsy, returning from the kitchen, said the missis wanted coal carried in at onst, an' that was all he'd got for takin' in the boots, so that she seen him. "Let ye go on, Mike, she wants it," said Patsy.

To which Mike returned callously, "Want'll be her master. There's for ye now!" A window was flung up, and Captain Deane, his complexion pinkly irate, thrust his head through it furiously, demanding his sphurs.

Mike, deftly flinging them to Patsy, announced that the sphurs were of course ready, an' all, but understandin' they were not wanted till the lasht, he had not carried them above. "Is that one ready yet?" breathed Mike desperately

"If ye do not want the fire to quinch on me will ye send Mike with the bucket of coals?" shrilled Mrs. Fenessy from the kitchen door. "There's only bits of red in it, and thimselves screechin' for eggs an' bacon an' tay. If it quinches, Patsy, I'll quinch yerself yet, not to tell Mike——"

"Couldn't ye let them drop oberight his eyes an' ye running in with them?" advised Patsy cunningly to his helper. "A few splatters'd give ye time. The divil wouldn't do the wurruk of a huntin' mornin'."

The adroit dropping of the spurs almost simultaneously with that of the window sash on Captain Deane's back, arrested all unpleasantness as to polishing. At this Mike, going for the coal, remarked dispassionately to Mrs. Fenessy that the Captin' was cut in two an' he lettin' roars ye'd hear in Cahervally; and Mrs. Fenessy returned that a grown man should have a care with the winders; and having tipped the long-sought coal onto the fire, proceeded to spread eggs on a lukewarm frying-pan.

The rescue of Captain Deane was somewhat protracted, for Mike took opportunity to finish the spurs, and Mrs. Deane, when she came at last, remarked that she thought he was merely speaking sharply to the men in the yard, she knew he had gone to put his head out.

Captain Deane had so much to say about the delay, that he stayed silent, as he came with dignity to his breakfast.

The eggs and bacon cooked over the half-lighted fire were beyond even his patience, and Vi'let departed with messages calculated to heat the whole kitchen.

Then the black mare from Dromin limped perceptibly when she came out of her hot stable.

Mike, touching her foreleg, gave a significant whistle.

"If ye had but to send that leg inside there would have been no need of a fire," he observed, as he ran to fetch a bandage. "Aisy known she wasn't Timsy's for nothin', an' that poor young lady inside that's blighted by thinkin' she knows things. Will we take her on, d'ye think? Will ye call thim?"

"The missus," said Patsy, "only tells me the mare is growin' a little splint, an' work is good. Better lave them alone, an' they dressin', too. Give me the grey's bridle, Mikky, an' don't forget the boots, an' ye saddlin' Mr. Fenessy's roan; he med pandy mash of his legs the cub hunt."

The Deanes' horses, one going delicately, started for the meet. Cara was on the way there from several houses, and a constant stream of horses came passing, grooms pausing to call out some greeting, Fenessy on his doorstep criticizing each horse as it passed. Hunting throbbed through the arteries of the day.

"The missus," said Vi'let, "is sorry about the eggs, but it bein' all on account of Patsy bein' so busy with the horses she couldn't help it, the fire bein' quinched on her, an' she has more down agin now."

Mike could drive a motor; the Deanes' car would therefore meet them or come home. Kitty, if she went in hers, would be obliged to leave it somewhere until she fetched it. Yet she refused the offer of a seat in the dicky with complete scorn. "She could always ride back," she said, "to where the car was."

The extreme reluctance of Sadie to fire, and the exhaustion of Mike as he tore madly at the handle flurried Kitty so much that when, with a splutter of missfiring, the car thrummed into uneven life, its driver

fled away down the road distinctly faster than she ought to have done, and was seized with a sudden lack of memory as to her brakes and foot levers.

Sadie panted desperately on two cylinders, taking hills with the ease of a cocktail in ten acres of plough, and Kitty steered her with wonderful luck and little else through a crowd which was unaware of its fortunate escapes.

The meet at Cromlin is always a large one. Horses and motors, traps and people gather in front of the house, which looks across to the first covert to be drawn for the season.

Harris, dreading fresh horses' heels, had gathered up the hounds on the dark back avenue leading to the yard under a deep archway. A cold and bitter shower drove him under this wind-swept shelter when he was waiting.

When the Master left his car and ran in to get his horse—which was in the yard—he applauded Harris's caution.

"Keep 'em there, Harris," he said. "Mrs. Delaney is afraid of her Orpington chickens. Don't go into the yard."

Harris spoke feelingly to one of the puppies which was eyeing a fat pullet anxiously.

"Steady there, Solomon. You knows the taste well, I'll be bound," said Harris. "Ten of 'em you ate, Miss Moroney complained. Gawd—save—'er——"

For at that moment Harris spied the American car, with Miss Adair at the wheel, spinning furiously round the corner.

Kitty had found the avenue empty; she had shied away from the crowd at the door and paused, calling out for Andy's man.

"Have a care of the dogs, miss; they're around at the back," he advised sombrely.

"Yes, mind the hounds—better back her up the side there," said Costello Moroney.

"I'll drive to the arch and get on there—it's wet." Kitty drove on straight for the archway, doing what she was told not to do. She meant to stop gracefully, but with a sudden throb of horror she realized that she was sliding on and that her foot brake was not acting. If she had looked down she would have seen that her right foot pressed hard on nothing, but she lost her head in her fear.

"Gawd—save—us!" said Harris, clattering from the archway with Tim, the second whip, driving hounds to him.

Kitty blew her horn, but she came on. Derrick Knox Harding, just reaching the back of his bay horse, Merryheart, saw Harris and the hounds pour across the yard in flight, and following them a girl completely terrified, in a car which she could not stop. Straight in front of the arch was a huge old coach-house. Harris dashed to it for safety, followed by Derrick, vigorously whipping at hounds, but as the bird walks into the cobra's mouth, Kitty, screaming horrified warnings, followed.

So, fortunately, did Mr. Moroney, running wildly.

"The side lever—pull it," he yelled. "Pull it—hard!"

Kitty's senses returned as she felt the blessed side brake grip, but before the wheels ceased to revolve, she was already in the doorway of the coach-house, with the Cahervally hounds and their Master pent up beyond her car.

Derrick Knox Harding lifted his hunting cap solemnly

in thanksgiving ; he was too kindly to say anything to the agitated little offender.

"The brake wouldn't act," gasped Kitty. "Though I shoved and shoved. Oh, I am sorry ! The horrid things !"

Then, looking down, a flood of scarlet replaced the white in her cheeks ; looking fiercely back she was not sure whether Moroney, who was just behind, had also seen.

"So what *could* I do ?" concluded Kitty, pressing the maligned brake viciously now, and hoping that no one had seen.

"Well—if you could let us out now," suggested the Master quite politely. "It's after eleven."

"But—I can't reverse," said Kitty blankly. "I don't know the things well yet. Of course, in a few days, you know——"

The M.F.H. observed thoughtfully that he feared people might get a little tired of waiting quite that time. He got off his waiting horse and commenced to push, but as Kitty had the brake full on the effect was useless.

"These cars are quite light," said Kitty. "Push harder ! If someone else would help. Oh, thank you, Huntsman."

Harris pushed at the other side vainly.

A crowd began to gather outside. Someone said all the hounds were killed.

"They are not, for there is Vengeance come out under the car," remarked Father Con. "I watched the vilyin. He is great on hens. An' Solomon after him."

"Then it is the Master's horse," suggested Mike hopefully. "Some should be dead inside be the noise an' the chat."

"Maybe it is only an odd dog or two," replied Father Con. "There is great danger in them spirity cars, after all."

"We shall be here all day," panted the Master, pushing.

The situation might have been prolonged, but Costello Moroney, coming again to the rescue, shouted directions to Kitty as he helped to pull.

"Get it to neutral—neutral! Good Lord! you'll be over the hounds if you do that. Turn her off! There now, push, Derrick, push! Turn that front wheel. No, this way, this way! Now!"

The somewhat amazing spectacle of a motor-car vigorously propelled backwards by the Master of Foxhounds and his first whip, with hounds leaping excitedly about it, was revealed to the waiting crowd.

Willing hands dragged Sadie to one side, until she rested safe and inert in the yard, with Kitty poppy-coloured at the wheel.

"There isn't one dead at all," said Mike, in disappointed tones. "Them is hard as nails, that breed of dog, for she must have been right over them."

Kitty was pinkly embarrassed as she got upon her horse. She had made an exhibition of herself on the first day. She had narrowly ~~escaped~~ doing serious mischief, and she knew vaguely ~~the~~ hounds were valuable.

"Perhaps worth five pounds each," said Kitty to herself. "Goodness, if I ~~was~~ killed ~~by~~

Varmint, who had cost a hundred, ~~rather~~ demurely past her. He wished to ~~emphasize~~ ~~that~~ he completely disowned association with the ~~noise~~ going on behind

him, where Vengeance and Solomon, puppies still, had found the young Orpingtons.

When Mrs. Delaney came wailing to the sound, three had gone to their rest ; whether slain by foxhounds or two strange terriers which had joined in, it was impossible to say ; but the indirect cause was Kitty, and Mrs. Delaney said so.

Miss Adair rode away with a subdued expression. The Cahervally field are not at any time over-partial to strangers. There is some rooted idea that it is the alien alone who can thoroughly knock down newly made-up fences, cut wire unnecessarily, and leave gates open when young horses are about. When a few weeks later the stranger is of themselves, there is no place he is so happy in, no people so kind ; but the first glances are those of suspicion.

Someone had said the Deanes had come to deal in horses. Someone else immediately called Oliver Deane a horse-dealer, and was even sure of where he came from. Henry gave growling hints as to mischief already done.

Little Jo Harding, the Master's sister, was the only one who came up to dejected Kitty.

" I did awful things myself at first," she said kindly. " It was never quite the hounds, but Sir James' carnations were nearly as bad, and I did down a whole bedful. Then there was the Blundells' swing-gate another time. The brakes are horrid things just at first."

When Jo rode away she knew that Captain Deane was not a dealer in horseflesh, but a Deane of Deane's Hollow, in Midshire. It was information to be imparted later.

Just then Kitty and her sister were not improving

matters with Miss Knox who was questioning them closely.

"And how do you like Ireland?" Miss Knox asked condescendingly.

Kitty, who was overwrought, said they found it curious. "Its luncheons are very long," she added gloomily; "especially at the Henessys'."

"Luncheon! at the Henessys'!" Ellen Knox asked a few more questions, and rode away disconcerted. Clearly these were not people to be too familiar with.

It did not improve matters either when Timsy rode up to Mrs. Deane, with boisterous friendliness and an uneasy eye fixed on the black mare's action.

"I'd say she had a little knock on her," he observed, as the black went on even more delicately than when she had left her stable. "I'd take her easy, Mrs. Deane, the day."

Young Gore, sombrely resplendent in his black coat, came up to Kitty. The importance of Miss Adair's fortune had been impressed upon him by his loving parent, who was anxious to see his son with some regular means of support. At present Lancelot's earnings were principally those of imagination. He blamed his lack of capital for his inability to make a fortune on young horses, and the wretched state of the Service for his failure in getting into it.

"They don't want men of my class," said Lancelot gravely. "Just the fellows really of use to them are left out—through jealousy."

Kitty Adair listened to Lancelot without enthusiasm. She smiled vaguely when he pointed out various points of the compass where the hounds generally ran to, and was only half impressed by the news of

how in most of these hunts Mr. Gore had led the van.

"A man must be able to think to ride over this country," said Lancelot. "It's no tear-away ahead, like those silly fly English counties; one must think of where one is going to and what places are wired."

"And which gates are not locked ones," observed Costello Moroney gravely, riding up. "I declare a brainless fellow like myself is always doing unnecessary damage to the banks, when a little thought would save it all."

Mr. Gore observed sourly that Costello was very funny.

Miss Adair reined back to talk to Andy. She told him the advice which had been given to her, and Andy's eyes twinkled.

"There is but one thing to think of out hunting, Miss Kitty," he said, "and that's the hounds. Watch them; and keep as close as you can to them, and don't press on them at a check; and if your heart's with the hounds, the fences will only be things between you an' them."

"That's more like it," said Kitty happily.

"An' don't lean too hard on that fellow's mouth," said Andy mildly; "he is not used to it. Balance yourself: it will come easy after a bit."

"The reins are so comforting when he joggles about," said Kitty dubiously.

"Be recalling," said Andy, "that a horse has at the one head and one pair of eyes in it, same as yourself, an' if he cannot use them to the full, an' he on top of a fence, don't blame him an' he to fall. 'Twould be hard for one of them athletics to lep out far if some

one gave him a job in the mouth with a bar of steel, an' he at his business."

They turned off the road and jogged onto the gorse, a snug, sheltered patch, fenced by high banks. Wet, poor fields stretched all round it. To the east rose Caherdavin Hill with its two long shaped groves of trees crossing it. Westwards the conical crown of Ballinmena poked up against the pearly grey sky.

Hounds dashed into covert, disappearing in the thick gorse.

Fresh horses plunged and sidled, squelching deep into the wet ground: from the waiting crowd came the constant chink of bits and curb chains, the low toned chatter as they waited.

Kitty, new to it all, stood staring at the gorse, pointing eagerly when a hound appeared out of the green mass, waiting with the thrills of the inexperienced for the mystery of a hunt.

So far not a whimper, not a sound save that of the chatter rising more loudly. Miss McCarthy chirruping wildly to her plunging black as it clove its way among quieter horses; Lancelot Gore's strident voice telling someone how out over the ditch beyond the covert keeper's house was the only way to get a start.

"I do wish," observed Kitty dolefully, "that at least one hound would yowl."

Derrick Knox Harding fixed a thoughtful look on his new follower; he murmured, half aloud, something about getting someone to jump on one to oblige.

"But I mean to yowl after a fox," said Kitty clearly, as one explains to a young child; "not hurt yowl: smell yowl."

Mr. Knox Harding said, "Oh!" and looked away shakily.

Madge Deane, who listened, may be pardoned if her temper, strained by the black mare's lameness, was drawn to cracking-point, especially as at this moment Mrs. Rivers, one of the leading ladies of the county, ranged up beside Kitty. Sheila Rivers was big and very good-natured, but it was difficult to sit quiet and listen to one's sister airing her ignorance to strangers.

"Not done much hunting?" said Sheila quietly.

"None. And they didn't want me to hunt here, because probably I shall fall off; but I met Andy, and I would do it. I never loved anything so much. And, oh, I want to have a run now."

"Making us ridiculous," seethed Madge in fierce undertone. "Kitty, be silent," she whispered.

"There's one," breathed Kitty, not hearing a word. "Oh, listen!"

It came, a low note, then another, a crashing and shaking of gorse as hounds rushed to it, a sudden clamour of confirming tongues.

"Hoic! Hoic! Try there! Try!" the Master was cheering them now.

An electric thrill seemed to run through the waiting field; the chatter died; the rattle and chink of bits grew more audible in the sudden stillness. Hands went upwards, giving hats a jam down; reins were shortened. Little Donough Knox sat forward, his face alight, his eyes searching for the clearest way. Old Andy's grey stood still, but with his ears pricked, his lean head moving up and down.

Silence again: the field gradually drawing on towards the corner of the gorse.

"He—he must have run away," said Kitty piteously. "Run away quietly, without our seeing him go."

"Not yet," Derrick laughed kindly. "Hoic! there: Hoic!"

Costello Moroney stroked his face thoughtfully as he looked hard at Kitty.

The tongues spoke again emphatically.

"Oh, Miss Adair, you don't know the country. Father thinks you might like to follow me." Lancelot Gore pushed his horse through the crowd.

When Kitty, with her eyes glued to the gorse, replied politely over her shoulder that, "Thank you *very* much, but she would rather try to keep near the hounds," she was quite unconscious of cause of offence, or why the Master rode on hurriedly, muttering something about a little breath to hunt hounds with.

"Kitty!" said Madge furiously.

"You see, Andy told me nothing but hounds," went on Kitty. "Oh! what—where?"

The fox had jumped on to the bank and back; half the pack flashed out onto the grass, and with a thunder and rush the field dashed through the wet gap and round to them.

Kitty, restrained by Andy, only got a short way; she stood bewildered, wondering what was happening, for the only movements the Master made were with his mouth.

Then Kitty turned and rushed back to Derrick. "He's dead," she wailed.

"Dead? . . . What?"

"Dead," said Kitty. "Two men have taken their hats off. Oh, the poor fox. Someone has ridden over him."

It is not an easy thing for a Master of Hounds to blow his horn and gasp with helpless laughter at the same time.

A small brown beast was slipping across the rushy field leaving the ground behind him as only a fox can.

Hounds burst out of covert close on him, fanning wide, flinging out from their line, then settling down in grim earnest, racing across the low land through pools of sullen grey water.

Kitty found herself carried on in a rush of people; wide-eyed, she watched them divide, some towards the road, some right-handed, some close on hounds.

"There's wire down there," Kitty heard the warning voice of Mr. Gore; "see, right ahead."

"Come on, missie, let him get around it. You come with me."

Old Andy, with the flea-bitten grey held hard, slipped by Kitty. The old horse would pull for a field or two before he settled to his work. "Come on, missie, jump on me if ye're able," called Andy, his old face alight. On a bank with a wide silver brimming ditch at the far side, the hounds swung sharply left-handed, making for the road.

There were two nasty, bushed-up fences, scrambling, stony places, with one or two gaps in them. Kitty, bewildered now, stuck to the grey horse, but was shoved out of her turn, and fell behind to find herself in a new crowd struggling with wire across a gap. She landed on to the road—one of the last.

"I begged you to follow me." Young Gore was standing in the road as she got out, looking over a stony bank.

"But . . . you have not got the hounds with you," wailed Kitty, seeing that she had lost her guide.

Mr. Gore said hurriedly that he was seeing which way they would turn. His further conversation was lost, for Kitty saw hounds streaking on two fields ahead, with a white horse just beside them.

The brown, nothing loath, took the high bank with a rocketing buck which laid his rider on his ears. His powerful stride ate up the next fields. Kitty sat up, wild with excitement, oblivious of everything save the desire to reach the pied dots ahead.

They checked, and she was with them, up to Andy's side, recounting her misfortunes.

"Hssh! Watch them, missie," he said. "Quiet!"

Hounds were casting across the field, eager, almost human in their cleverness, trying each yard of ground, swinging themselves wide, as though the Master's voice directed each one.

"See there!" Vengeance had it: Ravager had it: these old hounds darting ahead, the rest dashing to them.

"There is a big dyke in front," said Andy. "Have a care. It will stop some. Go steady into it."

It was a well-known double, with a huge ditch onto it, and a bigger one off, both yawning wetly deep.

"He is gone on for Glenomeragh. He is off five minnits—the grandest fox ever ye see!"

A chorus of delighted onlookers yelled for the big bank; shillings were generally to be gained at it when horses fell in. "Success, well over! Darlin' to ye!" this to Grania Knox Harding as she jumped. "Well done!" "There's Knox in; tell him to get

his horse along for fear there'd be another on top of him."

Old Andy's old grey, poised lightly, sprang easily over one of the biggest spots, followed in joyous ignorance by Kitty on her young brown, the five-year-old flinging himself out so far that he sprawled as he landed.

Scent was none too good; hounds checked again at the narrow road leading down to Glenomeragh, and upon it, waiting, was a division headed by Mr. Gore.

Kitty snorted wrathfully, wishing to know if Mr. Gore was always waiting for everyone.

"He thinks so much," said Moroney gravely; "that's what does it. He thought of that big double now, several times."

"And missed it, after all," said Kitty, "poor man! It was glorious—that jump!"

They crossed the road, running past a big slated house, and through the laurels round it. Glenomeragh Court was not far in front.

Here, with two or three fresh foxes on foot, it was not easy to get away.

They slipped on after ten minutes towards Ballinmena, Harris sublimely certain that "this there was the 'unted fox, he having remarked him very close leavin'."

"There is as many twishts in that felly as in a clemaytis," observed the Glenomeragh gardener, watching the hunt ring round the place.

"If meself an' the Masther wasn't rowlin' rocks all the day yestherday, he would be within long ago," replied the covert keeper. "If there is one rabbit with a skinned nose there's a hundther, an' they runnin' by mistake to the door they're used to be at."

It was all keen joy to Kitty. She rode the brown round and round unsparingly. She jumped unnecessary fences, and she was generally blissfully and completely happy.

It was only late October, and when they killed at last in a long wood, the brown horse was lathered and somewhat tired. Andy's inclination to suggest his going home was checked by a look at Kitty's radiant face. The rings and races round the place were unalloyed gold to her. As long as there was a fence to jump and that crash of tongues to listen to she cared for nothing else.

Mr. Lancelot Gore ate a sandwich, and said : " It was pretty rotten, wasn't it ? but Miss Adair must allow for what was practically cubbing. Father always said so."

" Why," said Kitty to Andy, " should he abuse that heavenly hunting ? Oh, why ? "

Andy explained that people liked to go out of a place and get away across the country-side ; he pointed to the green fields all round, and talked of points and gallops and great hunts. Talked with the glow of it lighting his weather-beaten face, for the flea-bitten grey and his master had seen most of those hunts close up to hounds.

They jogged on to Ballinmena, the big gorse nestling close to the hill, with Andy's house standing near, sheltered in the trees. Creina was waiting for the hunt, eager to see a find, as Mat was covert keeper.

Ballinmena cubs knew what hunting meant now ; one was not, and the others realized that one must run or cease to exist.

They slipped through the thick gorse away from the clamour behind them, until one set his mask sturdily

for the rocky hill where mother fox had shown him so many holes.

They ran fast to the hill and round it, clattering over the stony, uneven surface. Unkind hands had closed the holes ; the cub galloped off back to Ballinmena.

He chose the line straight through the bog, and Kitty took the last out of her generous horse by urging him recklessly through the brown earth which churned up to knees and hocks. Between the bog and the sound green fields is a deep treacherous trench, with a crumbling take-off and a steep stony landing.

Kitty, unaware that her horse was blown and dead-tired, took no notice of the people who turned right-handed to reach a bridge. She did not see Andy or Moroney, and her one idea was to follow the hounds.

A fresh horse, carefully pulled together, can get over the bounds ditch. The brown, with his head loose, absolutely blown, made a gallant but hopeless effort, hit the stone-faced landing with his chest, and scrambled, cat-like, scrabbling at the stones. Then he rolled over with Kitty underneath him.

"She's hurt!" Andy cried, spurring the old grey, and flashing down across the field.

For, relieved of the weight, the brown horse had clawed himself upwards, but a dark little lump lay inert on the edge of the trench.

"Missie," Andy cried.

Kitty looked up through a blur of pain into Andy's white face.

"Something happened," she said, as she slipped into a deep soft blackness.

"I advised Miss Adair to follow me," said Lancelot Gore, "and she would not. Oh, dear me, cannot the hunt be stopped?"

A gate was pulled off its hinges. Kitty was carried to Ballinmena, a limp, white-faced little thing, while the harassed cub found a rabbit-hole big enough to hold him.

She opened her eyes again near the door.

Anne Cafferty's kindly old hands helped to put the girl to bed. Honora brought in a dozen eggs and beat them into whisky with some idea of being useful. Everyone talked at once.

Kitty came to full consciousness in a bright little room looking out over the bog, and was told she was not to get up for at least a week.

Anne took the case into her own hands, quite brushing Madge Deane on one side. A wild plea for open windows from Kitty was severely received.

"Everyone knowin' that a breath of air might give you a chill that'd be yer death," reproved Anne Cafferty sharply. "Didn't me aunt's cousin that had the lungs bad get a pane broke in his windy the night of a bad sthorm, and it not mended for three days? an' he wint, poor lad, that day three months, coughing to the lasht."

When Doctor O'Mara, raked from the chase, opened the window himself, Mrs. Cafferty gave it up.

The doctor pronounced it a case of severe shock, and ordered Kitty to stay in bed for at least a week, but that Anne was to give her air.

"The airs of heaven blowin' straight in on the child that was in the bog trench not an hour back," said Mrs. Cafferty to Honora. "'An' lave it open, Mrs. Cafferty,' says he; 'yes, all the night,' says he; 'there's nothin' amiss but a shake,' says he; 'an' docthor air we musht have,' says he, 'especially an' the young lady used to it.'"

"An' that black mare, sir," said Patsy, coming in, "had besht stay here to-night ; she is broke down on the off foremosht leg ; no chance of the lady ridin' her home."

"Put her away and call it a cut until the morning. Patsy," said Andy ; "they have enough to worry them. Bandage her up and hide it."

CHAPTER IX

MADGE DEANE'S temper was peppery, but she was wildly anxious for the little sister who lay and laughed and said nothing was wrong, but was very weak for a few days.

Andy accepted Anne Cafferty's advice as to getting another room ready not to wear out the lady runnin' hither an' over, and the Deanes accepted with many apologies.

The second parlour was prepared. Anne baked before glowing fires with the extreme pleasure of a born cook, and Kitty lay in the sunny room and thanked heaven she was not at Fenessy's.

To be well in that airless spot with the noise of carts and smell of unclean streets drifting in was bad enough, but to have been sick there—— Kitty shuddered as she thought of Vi'let, and the sloppy cups of tea and thick bread and butter.

Andy fell into it philosophically. If Mrs. Cafferty did not mind it made no difference to him. His own meals were ready when he came in for them, undisturbed by the smoking chops and pies which he saw Anne carrying to the Deanes.

"An' why not we take them altogether," said Anne, "an' they clean daft for to stay? 'I never seen a chop done like that,' says the Captain to me, says he; 'ye bate London out, Anne,' says he, 'with yer cookin'.' An' I towlt him me hand was out on me or I'd whip

him up a taste of fluff an' jam for a sweet that'd float for lightness. 'An' wait,' says I, 'till I find the old book that's below in me big box,' says I, 'till ye see what I can do with bits an' scraps.'"

When Kitty, pale but recovered, came downstairs she made her way to Andy's room to give thanks.

"It will be like going back to school, leaving Mrs. Cafferty," said Kitty dolefully.

Andy poked up the turf fire.

"There are rooms here," he said, "an' if Anne cares to manage, I wouldn't mind—for onst. If you'd care to stay here, missie, instead of at Fenessy's, you and your sister and the Captain. I will take you and welcome."

"God save us, she will have a wakeness!" said Anne, gripping Kitty's arms. "Have done, miss, leppin' around. Sure, with Creina to lend a hand, an' she is dyin' to be away from home; an' yer own maid—though herself'll be the worst. There's no thrubble in life. It's an aise to me to do a taste of cookin' onst agin."

Kitty hurried unsteadily to her sister to tell the news. Madge was always prepared to object to something, but the comfort of the little farm-house curbed her desire to be chief plan-maker. The sitting-room could be made charming with cushions and rugs; the place was central, and Mrs. Cafferty's cleanliness after that of Vi'let and Mrs. Fenessy was as snow contrasted with coal.

Captain Deane discussed terms, delicately, with Andy, realizing the danger of giving offence.

"The same as Fenessy's" seemed to Andy robbery; he made the weekly rent include several things to ease his mind, and the bargain was made.

Mrs. Cafferty spent a glorious morning in the town, returning completely obliterated by parcels of groceries, and with the major portion of a sheep tied on to the back of the car.

Andy went out to look at his land, sighing vaguely ; any change is distasteful to the old.

"An' I hope they won't be a worrit, Danny," he said, dubiously ; "but it was hard to be refusin' the little one an' she sickly an' all."

Danny, who had waited sourly that morning for a cup of tea, decided that all sthrangers was a worrit.

"There's a gran' young woman in a black dhress over her, with a sour puss on her looking about, an' she shakin' odd things out the winders," said. "If it is the way Mrs. Cafferty sees her lookin' for dust after herself, there might be mischief. Will ye meadow the four acres this year, Mr. Andy, an' ye gone? Betther for ye to be schemin' it all out now."

"An' he gone." Andy leant his arms on a gate. It was a wrench to leave the farm, but he thought of the great ship churning through blue waters ; of the sights he would see ; and out there of Kate waiting so long for his coming ; and of the angels in marble which should guard her now.

"You will look to things, Danny," he said. "It will be a great trip for an old man—an' I waited a long time for it."

"I went to Dunhaven meself onst," Danny observed. "A long road in the thrain'd cramp a man. Three hours we tuk, an' we jerkin' an' joltin' all the time. It was the year ye sint me for the rheumatics, Misther Andy, to take the salt wather.

Faix! the waves washed it out of me too. Will ye look at the bullocks outside now, sir?" Danny stopped suddenly. "Mat has a sight of sthock got," he said. "See them beyant. They came from the sales."

Mat O'Neill's fields were dotted with cattle. Andy stroked his chin.

"I will make over," he said, "an' ask him how he got them."

Mat was busy fencing; busy and full of hope. He had got the stock cheaply. If things went well he might have a great profit, enough to show the money he wanted.

"But if they go badly," said Andy's inner voice. The cattle were bought with borrowed money; if they died, Mat would be liable, and the sale of all his own beasts would not pay the debt.

"I'm doubtful of that bad hay, Mat," he said thoughtfully.

They sampled the stuff in a big rick; it was bad-coloured, but sweet-smelling. No harm in it.

"If"—Mat looked round, as if afraid some listener might lurk in the hay—"if I had the bit of money, Mr. Quin, I could be as good as Timsy above there to ask bould for Creina, an' I'm sot on her," said Mat wistfully.

There was no thought in him of taking off the girl against her parents' wishes; that was not of his race. A girl must go where she was told; the highest bidder was the right one.

"An' I tell you, Mat, there's not much behind the show at Dromin," said Andy suddenly. "I wouldn't say where Timsy's money is to come from, but I *would* say that Creina's bit would have a better chance of

doin' yourself good than it has of bolsterin' up Timsy. If I wasn't goin' away I might have helped you, Mat."

Mat hoped that he could help himself.

The glow of early November was on the land. St. Martin's little summer held its short reign; the sun shone warm and clear; there was no wind, and a silver maze of gossamer webs running across painted bramble and leaves, and tall spikes of grass, promised that it was not ended. The clear air made hope easy. Then, coming cautiously, stooping by a hedge, they saw Creina.

"Seein' ye run over, Uncle Andy," she whispered, "an' I just to dodge Mrs. Henessy, an' she drivin' up the boteen. 'A most disgraceful entrance way,' she says to the gossoon that drives."

"'Begor, an' it is so, ma'am,' he says, 'near as bad as our own.' An' I just got away. an' they lookin' for me now. See there."

A distant blur showed high on a fence, and a distant thin note bore some semblance to wails of "Creina."

"They will send up for you to the house," said Andy mildly.

"An' I will be away doin' a message," returned Creina merrily, feasting her eyes on the cattle.

She had gained time; they were not hurrying her. She owed it, had she known, to Mrs. Henessy finding it difficult to procure the whole of the five hundred pounds from her friends and relatives.

One uncle would advance three hundred provided it was never allowed out of his sight; the second she asked was difficult to convince of its return.

"If ye walked off with it where would all yer

writin' help me?" he had said. "Up before the judge shamin' me own family, an' maybe a swhear that the promise was never med, an' a rascal of a Counsellor to pay for speechifyin'."

So that, concealing the reason, Mrs. Henessy merely remarked that life was long, and Creina, hope in her heart, had breathing time.

The young cattle would grow and thrive. Mat would come forward with his money, and then she would stand firm.

"An' they lookin' for me," repeated Creina happily, "an' the sweet cake forgot for the tay; I was to bring it yesterday."

Andy's eyes twinkled kindly.

"It would be as well you should be above anyways," he said, "and then if Mrs. Cafferty has you sent a message there's no help for it." Andy contemplated the streams of smoke pouring from different chimneys, as he said dolefully his house wasn't his own at all now, and that he wasn't sure but he was mad to be takin' in lodgers.

Madge's English maid, come prepared for difficulties, was endeavouring to make them, heatedly.

She banged dustless rugs out of windows; she re-settled furniture, and sniffed every time she looked at the yard. The baths took up too much room in the bedrooms. Timmins, in aggressive tones, wished to know who would carry them up each morning.

"Creina will lend a hand whin she is there, an' isn't there Pattie an' yer own man?" Mrs. Cafferty was peering into the cookery book, gloating over a pudding of extreme richness which she had made in her younger days.

"Men!" said Timmins, "an' baths—to bedrooms."

"Six eggs," murmured Anne Cafferty, "bate the yolks separate, an' six ounces of butter—Creina, child, run to Honora for a pound of it—an' cream. An' what is min med for, Miss Timmins, but to drag things; if they didn't do that would they be worth what they swallys? An' castor sugar—God sind I didn't forget that same—would ye look on the shelf there, Miss Timmins, an' see can ye lay yer hand to it? An' the whites to a froth. Pattie, lave down them bridles,—an' run in to clout a few eggs for me, till Creina is back. Hurry on, Pattie."

"Merciful heavens!" observed Timmins, hurriedly laying down a bag of ground rice by Mrs. Cafferty's side. "What a spot to come to! May I observe, Mrs. Cafferty," she added, eyeing a pot upon the fire, "that I do not care for salt pork, finding it unsuitable for my health?"

"Health where are ye?" said Mrs. Cafferty absently, her head in the cookery book.

The pudding suffered somewhat from ground rice instead of sugar, a mistake rectified by adding the sugar also.

"That is the soort I used to make," Mrs. Cafferty announced, with fiery-faced pride, as she laid the steaming monster down. "Is there a chop left, Captain?"

Oliver Deane looked guiltily at Mops, the terrier, who was licking his lips.

"As well him as Miss Timmins," said Mrs. Cafferty equably; "there is a cold slice of beef outside for her."

When Andy strolled back across the fields, he

found Kitty in the yard, and the Moroneys' wagonette at his door. Miss Moroney had come to call.

A visit to the Deanes' horses was, of course, necessary; they bloomed now on good oats and hay in airy if somewhat ancient stables.

Kitty had brought Patsy with her from Henessy's; he had in fact declined to stay behind, and he was now to be called Pat, to save confusion with Andy's boy.

The black mare limped only too perceptibly when they came to look at her, pointing her foot in ominous fashion.

"The knock," said Madge Deane, "is not improving."

Costello Moroney slipped the bandages off and looked critically.

"Timsy must have kept her in the boiler to get it right," he said slowly; "she broke down badly with Dickson. Nothing but the irons now, Mrs. Deane, and the winter's rest, I'm afraid."

"Broken down—before?" said Madge hotly.

"Now, did you think Timsy would have had her if she hadn't?" said Costello absently. "She was worth a lot of money once. Timsy chanced her and stewed her up till he met the right people." Here Costello coughed as if Madge's glance had struck him in the throat.

The black mare laid back her ears at the babble which echoed through her stable.

It was only a knock, a mere nothing, no breakdown at all. "Mr. Quin," shrilled Madge; "come here!"

Andy stilled a twinkle in his eyes when he was

appealed to. He sighed as he re-bandaged the hot, swollen leg, which the man was resting miserably.

"She might come right with a month's rest," he said, "but she'll go the first day she gallops. She broke down with Mr. Dickson after the big hunt two years ago."

"And everyone—knew—it!" panted Madge, in high staccato, "and—didn't tell—me."

"Wasn't he sellin' the horse?" observed Andy mildly. "How could we tell? There's vets——"

Mrs. Deane crossed the yard to the house at a pace which indicated a disturbed mind. She sat down on one of her new cushions and decided Ballinmena was hateful.

From the yard outside came the sound of voices: Pattie's and her maid's.

"Will ye lay a hand to him, Lucy, while I washes out his feet?"

"I know nothing as to holding animals' heads, *Mister Sullivan*,"—this from Timmins.

"That is Michael. Me name is Magrath," said Pattie placidly. "Lay a hand to him now like a good gerril; he's arkard an' ye at his hindmost feet."

Mrs. Deane, rising, beheld Timmins meekly holding a large bay colt by the bridle, as Pattie washed the horse's feet.

"This is an impossible place," she said, sitting down again.

But Mrs. Cafferty brought in three varieties of hot cakes for tea, accompanied by a quart jug full of cream, and a dish of yellow butter, and Madge thought of Fenessy's bread and butter and grew more resigned.

Timmins, who was deputed to answer the front door, came hurriedly in response to a call, to usher in Miss Gore, who had come to ask for Kitty.

"I came on, as you suggested," said Elaine to Mr. Moroney, who eyed her thoughtfully and gloomily.

"She met us on the road and asked us where we were going to," he confided aside to Kitty, noting that young lady's look.

Miss Adair buttered a hot cake fiercely, without appearing to hear. She no longer saw the kindness of her visitor's coming to inquire for her.

Elaine made little remarks about the Deanes' new lodgings. She giggled at the supply of eatables, and looked playfully for boiled eggs.

"When mamma and I had tea here we had boiled eggs," said Elaine, "nice brown ones—six of them—and cold ham, and honey."

"Mr. Gore," announced Timmins.

"Father said I had better come to fetch you, Elaine, when he got your message by the groom. Father considered the walk home too far for you."

Lancelot's sister eyed him with a glance which lacked affection. A lady alone must be offered a lift on a winter's evening, but a lady with a brother and a trap is independent.

"Your accident," said Lancelot to Kitty, while Mr. Costello brightened quite perceptibly, "was dreadful. If you had only followed me it would never have happened. Father considers a lady should have a reliable pilot."

Kitty, again devoid of intent to offend, said that she hated roads. "I don't know them, and I should be always wondering if the hounds would ever come

across them," said Kitty; "so it's better for me to try to follow the hounds and Andy."

Mr. Moroney put four lumps of sugar into his tea very quickly, and Mr. Gore opened his mouth without speaking, twice—his cheeks were a lively scarlet.

"I am almost always with hounds, Miss Adair," he observed stiffly, when he did speak. "Father considers my eye for them is quite extraordinary. I seldom make mistakes."

"Always up at the end," said Costello, fishing out two lumps of sugar. "Wonderful fellow, Miss Adair, is Lancelot; knows which way we're going by instinct, and every piece of wire in the county."

"I make a list of those which I can remember," said Lancelot proudly, "and on Sunday morning, I sometimes use a nippers—surreptitiously of course."

Mr. Moroney approvingly said he had not believed that Lancelot had it in him, and added that it was a good idea.

His aunt said good-bye; as she did so she asked the Deanes and Kitty to come to Doonedurra next day.

"She's done it now," said Costello gloomily in a whisper.

Kitty, still aloof in manner, inquired, "Done what?" politely.

"Astolat will dive in the wagonette and forget something," said Moroney, "that's all. She'll come over for it to-morrow."

"But surely," returned Kitty, "that will be very nice for you."

"I had two nice horses to show you," said Costello

meek'y, "that was all. They're away up the fields, and she hates fields."

Kitty recovered rapidly. She was well enough to ride in a week, and the joys of hunting were again before her. With the black mare languishing in her box, the Deanes had to buy something else to carry them, and with new-born distrust of all local people, wrote to a big dealer to supply them with something sound.

The subsequent arrival of a very light-middled bay, with a well-set-on head and tail, pleased Madge highly, and made Andy look dubious. The horse was up to no weight. He pulled very hard when he was fresh, and was inclined to stand still when he had finished pulling, so that he was returned as useless after his week's trial.

"Which dealer," said Madge tragically, "can one trust, Mr. Quin?"

"The one who thinks you might be stayin' in the county," said Andy, "and so buy again from him. There is Father Con up to borrow the bay for to-morrow. His black is no bad horse either, if you want one."

Kitty went out for her next meet to the distant stone-wall country. Andy borrowed a grey cob for her from a friend there, and took out a black youngster himself. The grey cob was a stout animal without any shoulder and an alarming method of jumping, but he could get over any height, and gallop all day.

"We can't hunt over this," was what Kitty said when she saw the poor light land, with its crop of whity-grey stones breaking from the surface. All round the network of stone walls crossed and recrossed

and stretched in endless tangle. Some single, high, and formidable, some double; huge cairns of stone towering across the world, with bushes rooted through them, brown against the grey. The river flowed to the west, a mirror of placid water, tinted with silver and opal. There was a curious, lonely fascination in the scarred land, in its humps and hollows; its background of water and hill. Here, if hounds slipped away, one was quickly lost in the billowing crags, wandering and slipping on, among spare little thorn bushes, amongst scattered gorse and sheltering thorn hedges, until at last one caught sight of a distant blob of pink, or some horse against the skyline, and scrambling on, found hounds again.

The first draw was in the depths of the crags, a green gorse set in a wide wilderness of stone and hump and bush. With ant-heaps to trip over, and deep holes in the rocks for a horse's foot to catch in, and cover so great that a fox might twist and turn all day until he found a hole; but then, to bring comfort, beyond this brown, barren country lay green fields, fenced by flying stone walls, nothing to stop hounds or horses—a perfect country to run over.

Kitty left matters to the stumpy cob when, in the first rush from Caherline, she was carried up and down the steep stony rises. Hounds hunted beastfully through the scrub, pouring out on one high slab of grey. They were a mass of life against the cold wildness of the stones. There was something dreamlike and unreal in the endless circling through the crags; in the dividing of the field as wise people rode along the easy ways they knew of, and others stood still waiting; in the wave of shaggy, unclipped colts which surged about on every side.

Some refusing, some rocketing high over each gap, all raw and half-broken and half-fed, and yet learning their business before they were bought and taken away to kinder lands. Some of the unkempt three-year-olds, with lumpy old saddles stuck on their shoulders and cracked reins to the rusty bits in their mouths, might yet be valuable hunters.

Andy rode quietly round the stony ground, saving his horse for a better country. He believed in teaching a horse over the rough crags.

"It teaches them to mind where they're going," he said. "They can't open out and be away with you down here, and for all the look of it, it does not hurt them."

A gleam of sunshine turned the river to gold. Andy looked wistfully at the wide expanse of water.

"Won't it be strange," he said, "that all round you, and always round you, but tossing and tumbling instead of still, and no land ever for days an' days?"

"Ye'll be losht as a crag fox'd be above in the bank country," observed Con Malone, a thin and eager-eyed man riding a rough-looking bay mare, "without a place to lay yer feet onto that ye're used to, Andy."

"That's so," said Andy thoughtfully.

Round again, clattering and sliding over rocks and humps, with the fox trying each hole until he found one apparently missed by the covert keeper. Dan Grady had a rooted objection to seeing his foxes killed close to covert, and a hard-pressed one found, more than once, a stone rolled away from a hole which he had tried vainly half an hour before. Dan was a pinnacle of virtue poised on a rock in the gorse, high for all men to see, but Dan's little sons

could wriggle gently from bush to bush when hounds had got a little distance away, and then wriggle back again unseen.

"As usual," remarked Derrick philosophically, as he saw his hounds cluster round a hole and heard their furious protest against this sheltering of the fox they had hunted.

Crehora, a gorse lying snugly in the green fields, was the next draw. The grey cob brought disaster to Kitty on the way there, for as they schooled across, he raced into a high wall, and his sudden stop before he collected himself sent Kitty flying over his shoulder, to land with an undignified bump at Costello Moroney's feet.

As Kitty, scarlet with annoyance, scrambled up and tried to explain how the grey had fallen somewhere, that worthy animal gave her the lie direct by appearing at her side, having landed ever as she had.

"But something happened," said Kitty.

"I was very near catching you too," Costello observed, getting off. "If I'd known what was fighting out beside me I might have, but you never know what flies out of this covert here in the crags, a pheasant or a goat lying on the wall, or——"

"Would you mind bringing that grey pony over here," said Kitty, in glacial tones, "where I can get up on to him?"

"And a goat'd be terrible awkward to catch," observed Con Malone, who had come to assist. "Ye're not the first that cob knocked, miss, the way he has of humpin' himself."

"A—goat?" said Miss Adair, riding on. "A—goat!"

"She is not too well plazed to be knocked," said Con sympathetically, "the craythur. If she landed on a sthone the way she was travelling, she would be apt to be hurted."

"She would," said Costello, pursuing the irate damsel. "She's young to the game, Con."

"She should have a more ondependent horse, thin," said Con, also pursuing. "Not that rogue that makes a tally of the sthones to see how high he must bump up his knees."

Kitty's bruised feelings were not soothed by the sympathy offered by Elaine Gore. That young lady seated her plump form into her saddle as she remarked that it must be dreadful to be bucked off, and that she was sure it was all balance, as she had never put a voluntary, and she did hope that poor dear Miss Adair was not hurt.

"Miss Adair," said Costello, "was not bucked off. Her horse made a bad mistake and then the goat——"

"The goat," said Kitty, her brow clearing.

"The goat which frightened your bob," said Costello, "the one I saw somewhere near the top of the wall."

Miss Adair eyed him thoughtfully, but she rode on with him to the gorse.

A wild, thick place stretching over a big field, difficult to get away from, but, once away, with grass all round, fenced by fair stone walls. A few of the huge doubles lowered heavenwards round the gorse, but after half a mile one could desire no better country.

Vampire spoke to it almost at once. Dainty and Susan echoed her opinion; the peevish little note

of the ladies rang out to the field waiting on the road.

Harris viewed him ; his cap went up. Five minutes later five enthusiastic farmers hurled their woolly mounts over the wall off the road in hot pursuit of the fox, yelling as they went.

This manoeuvre had the result of sending that astounded animal fleeing back to cover, where, observing several lean heads topping the thorn-grown fence which bordered it, he turned left and slipped away for Colman's Hill.

"Didn't we make afther him splendid?" observed young Con Malone to his friend Mike Mahaffy.

"And headed him noble," said Andy, passing them ; "but you drove him away from the crags anyway, boys."

The second fence out of cover was one of the monstrous double walls, jumped to the echo and clatter and rattle of falling stones. A couple of soft places were left for the horses from year to year.

"I would say," observed Con to Andy, as they scrambled through in their turn, "that the min who ruz that fence had idle hours on their hands."

Hounds were racing away across the green fields. Kitty smote the grey cob and flew in pursuit. When his blood was up the cob jumped faster and more easily ; he could gallop at quite a good pace.

Andy had already slipped out of the crowd ; the young horse dashing at the walls with too much ardour even by himself, but fencing with the splendid spring of youth and impetuosity.

Kitty found the cob's short strides a very different matter from the brown's ; she grew hot, her breath

came in pants; but she was completely happy. She and Andy were close to hounds. In their wake came a division of woolly horses, scattering or flying the fences as impulse took them, banging up against each other in gaps, answering gallantly to the calls of their tweed-capped riders.

"He is into Colman's. He is not, but turned west for Beech Hill, the foremosht dog is bendin' over that way. He has a faulty nose on him so, for young Casey is bawlin' above at Colman's. Do ye see him screechin'? They have the thrail losht I tell ye."

The chorus rose as hounds checked for a minute.

Harris, imploring them to stand still, came galloping up. He had had a bad turn.

"There was one dog and he med away for Beech Hill," confided young Con Malone, "but I'd say he was only wishful to get there himself (unless there'd be two foxes), an' Mick Casey is bawlin' still oberight Colman's."

"The h-ignorance," murmured Harris loftily, "wishful to get there. There you are, sir, there it is!"

Vampire had flung her dark tan body ahead and was tearing down by a big drain. They ran fast to Colman's, thundering through a yard up to the thick thorn bushes which so often held a fox.

Casey greeted them scornfully as he wished to know what delay was on them. "An' he inside there tin minutes, cool and aisy for himself," said the youth hoarsely. "The throat off me bawlin' at ye. Ye had but to lift in the dogs, an' ye had him," remonstrated the excited Casey.

They ran back then over the same good country,

back to Crehora. Was there anything like it on earth, Kitty wondered, as the untiring cob clumped on over the light going, and the grey walls slipped beneath one, and the hounds drove ahead with the blood-cry echoing in uneven music.

Racing him up-wind, he was rolled over before he got back to the gorse. And the day was over. The grey cob had had enough. Andy's young horse, with several scratches on his legs, was distinctly tired.

They rode back in a grey softness of coming twilight to the house where Kitty's car had been left.

Mr. Moroney, jogging with them, seemed peculiarly distressed about his long ride home.

"But Miss Gore," said Kitty, "told me she hoped to give you a lift. She has got a trap out."

Mr. Moroney said something under his breath. A film of coming rain drifted up from the horizon; the hedges stirred with a faint chill wind.

"That pony of hers," observed Costello mournfully, "goes slowly enough when one is whipping it, but when she talks too much to stir it up at all, it crawls."

"No doubt," returned Kitty icily, "you find so much to talk about that it generally crawls."

"It does," said Costello sadly.

They jogged on, in silence, for a time.

"A fresh piece came off the roof of the old part of the house to-day," he said; "the rain will remind me of it. It's sad to see an old place go to ruin, Miss Adair."

Kitty turned in the gate of the yard where the car waited. A sudden chill certainly fell upon her

as she felt that she would never get Sadie round and out of the gate without assistance.

She gave her cob to Con Malone's man, tipped that worthy generously, and looked dubiously at Moroney.

"If you just turned her round while I took a cup of tea," she said; "the people in the house say they'll give me some. Then, if Mr. Quin's man will take the horse, I can drive you."

After cups of strong tea and hunks of soda bread and a fevered ten minutes spent at the starting handle, Kitty got under way, Sadie firing feebly on two cylinders, and unable to speak, save with missfires, of the game which the miller's son had played with her tremblers.

When these were adjusted and the car began to hum along splendidly, they came upon Miss Gore whipping the lazy pony homewards.

"Mr. Moroney stayed to help me, but I brought him on to you quickly," said Kitty sweetly, as she stopped.

Costello Moroney gave one bitter look towards the tremblers which he had adjusted, but he got out without a word and into the pony trap. The thin rain was already beginning to fall.

"That was treatin' him very cruel," observed Andy, as they drove on under their hood. "Have a care, missie! cattle costs money. That one has a fright got anyways—let alone the bit of skin it lost."

"Hunting," burst out Kitty, "is the most glorious thing on earth, but there are some people—some people—that I wish would hunt with other hounds. People who call you goats, and say you were bucked off, and——"

"That was Con Malone's aunt, an' if she had not the luck to step into the ditch, she was dead," said Andy mildly. "Would you go easier, Miss Kitty, passing things!"

"It was opening the throttle when I thought I was shutting it," apologized Kitty. "It is so hard to remember things when you're worried, Andy."

CHAPTER X

"IS it true, Mrs. Madden," asked Mrs. Casey, "that Mat O'Neill has the world of cattle on his lands?"

Mrs. Madden said it was thrue as the lasht time the red cow kicked her, and Mrs. Cafferty, with a smothered wail, picked Mrs. Casey's umbrella off the pastry which she had been making for dinner.

"I run over to see the way Creina was gettin' on. Small use she was to me at home, but she had her mind set to come here an' learn to help in a house."

"Wouldn't she make the nate parlour-maid?" observed Anne Cafferty absently, working at her outraged pastry.

Mrs. Casey said "parlour-maid" three times very shrilly, and sat down with some symptoms of weakness. Creina, that was goin' to be missus about at Dromin, with her own side-car and her own maid to wait on her!

"It's parlour-maids she'll be havin' herself, Mrs. Cafferty," said Mrs. Casey, trembling with wrath.

Anne Cafferty, privileged by relationship, shook her head, fashioned her tart in silence, filled its vast expanse with crusts of bread, and bade Patsy see if the oven was fit.

"If it blisters the skin on yer hand it's pasthry

hot," said Anne. "Hurry on, Patsy, and see. Nosin' it won't do."

Patsy put a martyr's hand into the heated cavern, to withdraw it with a howl and announce that "Father Con wouldn't axe greater hate for a murderer."

"Is it the aguey ye have, Anne," demanded her cousin irritably, "the ways yer head is shakin' on ye?"

"It is not," said Mrs. Cafferty, "but thinkin' there's too much face above at Dromin, Nora—that's it: an' nothin' behind that same. Thinkin' maybe Creina'll do her own maidin' there in a few years' time, an' milk her own cows if there's any to milk, for some says that all Timsy has is the debts that kapes him goin'. No one bein' anxious to sell him up for fear they'd get nothin' at all amongst all the others."

Nora Casey, full of wrath, enumerated Timsy's share of the fortune. "Five hundred pounds down, in gold; an' cows, an' sheep, all agin what Creina had."

"Don't be sayin' I didn't warn ye," said Anne, unmoved; "there's as much dirt in corners there as we wouldn't have here in the yards. Kate, the gerril, tells me there isn't a day but Timsy'll be home with somethin' new, a whip or a coat or ties, and Grace, that'd help and be useful, won't be let, but musht be grand, always lookin' for a man to take her. I'm thinkin' a few pounds of Creina's money'll be put aside for another's fortin."

Miss Timmins, who was mending at the window, remarked suddenly that the Irish were really peculiar.

"Love," said Timmins, biting a thread, "should

be considered before all things ; and here it is only money. When Mr. Hanby proposed to me, offering a house and a head gardener's income, I refused. I would not be put second to his prize carnations, and he acknowledged that they came first in his mind."

"Save us !" said Pattie, "wasn't that quare now. If 'twas a hunther befour ye—but posies."

"And I," went on Timmins, "have a fifty pounds legacy and other savings—yet I put love first."

"Would ye lay hold of the ind of that bridle, Lucy," said Pattie, "and pull it while I rubs it? I cannot belt eggs for a minnit, Anne, me hands is full. An' here is Creina herself."

Creina's face fell as she saw her mother. She feared she might be taken home. The guilty knowledge of a walk to the covert reddened her cheeks as she kissed her irate parent.

"I was chattin' about yer weddin', Creina," said Mrs. Casey grandly, "an' all ye'll have above at Dromin, an' how ye'll call on yer mamma in yer own side-car."

Pattie, over the bridle, said cheerily that Creina might call the car her own when she had Timsy's mother buried.

"For that's herself's," said Pattie, "part of her fortin. Ould Henessy had tō lay down two pigs agin that, so I've heard me father say."

Mrs. Cafferty hurried with tea ; the hot cakes were browning in the portable oven ; the big one was sacred to the tart.

Creina slipped out again. A golden light spread over the western sky, rosy islands floating against the glow ; wisps and streamers of grey trailed higher up, barring the blue distance of the air. Though it was

November it was soft and mild, no sting in the evening air ; a faint west wind just ruffling the hedges.

A night which brought the desire for happiness to the surface of the river of youth. On cold days, in storm and dreariness, it can endure ; but soft sunlight brings hope out fluttering his wings, whispering to youth what youth should dream of.

With Creina it was a long, thatched cottage snuggled down among a group of trees, and a good-humoured, blue-eyed young fellow who was even now working quite close to her.

Kitty Adair, coming in from the stables, stood still at the little gate. She too looked wistfully into the golden evening, across the peaceful fields. The love of lonely, reckless Ireland was coming to her heart. England was trim and orderly and rich, a stolid person decked in rich fur and silk and stuff ; with filled purse in her plump hand ; with her list of life's orderings written down in plain writing. Ireland, a feckless wisp of girlhood, tender, faithful, careless, passionate, tears in her grey eyes, smiles on her sweet lips. A gay wrap flung over her ragged underskirt of poverty ; dancing through sunshine, laughing at rain. No list in her hands, no gold in her pocket, more ready to give to charity than to pay her debts. " Each day for itself," said Ireland. Her eyes would cloud when her sons and daughters sailed away. " But these sons will come back rich," she would laugh through her tears, and so be happy even in loss.

One was a thing to respect, and one a true woman to love but never understand, and Kitty Adair was learning the grey witch-land's spell as she watched the sun sink beyond the silver waters of the Caher.

"'Tis the fine night, miss." Kitty saw Creina standing at the low wall.

"Just lovely"—Kitty sat down—"and like summer, but it makes you—kind of sad, Creina."

"I'd say it makes ye want to be too happy," half whispered Creina. "That's it. It calls to ye, miss."

Kitty nodded her head thoughtfully.

"An' makes us want to do what we want to do," murmured Creina, "but none of us can. There's meself; an' there's Mr. Moroney now above at Doonedurra, that can't plaze himself for a wife, but must marry the money."

"Is he very poor?" Kitty asked, her face turned aside.

"Me papa says he had bad luck with the land," Creina answered. "His father's debts died with him, so I dunno how it is that Misther Costello is so poor in himself. The big house is tumblin'. But Miss Gore has a fine fortin that an uncle left her, an' they say it will be her that he'll take."

Creina talked on, telling shyly of her own troubles. How, though she longed for Mat, yet fate willed she must go to Dromin and be miserable there.

Kitty returned startlingly rebellious advice. Creina must make a stand, go out to service, do anything except marry a man she disliked.

But the obedience of her race was still heavy on Creina; she listened with brimming eyes, and yet knew she would not dare to rebel.

"Times I think I *cannot* do it," she said, a sob in her voice; "but thin, to shame papa an' mamma an' make liars of them. But if Mat's cattle does," her face brightened, "'twill be all akel, they'll lave me to him. There's a caller, miss, comin' up the road."

Mr. Lancelot Gore leapt lightly from a bicycle and greeted Kitty. He said that his papa had directed him to come over and ask them all to luncheon on Sunday. Kitty felt that her visitor did not tone in against the fading gold and deepening greys of the evening; she sat on outside, waiting for a call to tea.

Lancelot remarked that he had left his sister at Doonedurra, taking tea with the old lady.

"Shocking state that house is in, papa says," said Lancelot, carefully adjusting his bicycle against the wall.

"Mr. Moroney is so very poor," said Kitty frigidly.

Lancelot moved the bicycle, and shook his head vigorously, and gossiped pleasantly.

Costello Moroney, it appeared, had been left quite a fair sum of money by his father: there were debts, but they had died with the old man. "Moneylenders' arrangements," said Lancelot airily. "No one knows why poor Costello is so penniless, but father thinks ——" here Lancelot stopped hurriedly—apparently what father thought was not to be passed on to Kitty.

Miss Adair drummed her heels against Andy's wall. The pity she had felt for the struggler was now distinctly tempered.

"Father says," observed Lancelot, "that if anyone else had all that place they would be rich: and oh, also, father has a horse if you want one, Miss Adair—just a lady's horse, so showy."

Kitty led the way in to tea. Mrs. Cafferty was walking round a new variety of cake with a pride which called plainly for praise.

There was a great deal of jam in the centre, oozing stickily from the sides.

"Take a piece, miss, 'tis all fluff," advised Anne, as she cut it, "an' a piece for Master Lancelot. Maybe ye'd be afeared of yer fat, sir. It's good mate b'ys wants for bone."

"A most insufferable woman," said Lancelot, when Anne went out.

"Mrs. Cafferty," said Kitty, "is a darling duck. She lets me make toffee and steal Honora's cream for it. We put a pint in last time, and we ate it with spoons afterwards—it wouldn't set!"

Kitty went out in the car next day; she wanted a new bridle and bandages for the insatiable Patsy. Some devil, it appeared, had run in unbeknownst to him, an' swhep' the lasht set to tie on a load that was toppin' over.

Cahervally had adopted the strangers now. Kitty met several friends in the town, and she listened with flushed cheeks to the hopes of a fine hunt on Monday. Longtoun Gorse was to be drawn.

Kitty left Patsy behind in the town because she could not find him. She wrote a stormy message telling him to come on Andy's cart or trap, and drove away alone.

Sadie had been behaving excellently. Kitty drove along in safer fashion than she had been wont to, until she was stopped by someone waving wildly from a pony trap, and saw Elaine Gore.

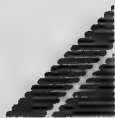
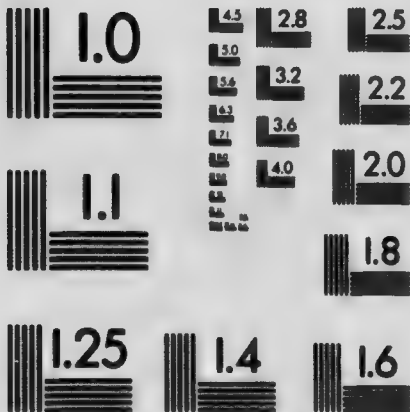
Elaine had nothing particular to say, except that she was so glad Kitty could come to luncheon, and that she was now going to call at Doonedurra.

She had met dear Miss Moroney, but Costello was out looking at a young horse. "He is up toward Dromin," said Elaine, "so do tell him to hurry back. I want to ask him about Flyaway's bad hock."



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Kitty let Sadie into the top gear with a jar which sent that light car leaping from the road. She drove on, not at all sure of her way, but guiding herself by Ballinmena Hill, until she saw Mr. Moroney shutting a gate onto the road, and she pulled up again. He was walking, and pulling a bicycle through the muddy gap.

"Good evening. You are to go home quickly," said Kitty politely.

"I was going over to call on you," said Costello; "not going home."

"Miss Gore has gone to Doonedurra and she wishes to see you about a hock," went on Kitty, ignoring the last remark. "She said you were to hurry back. Good afternoon!"

Now it was base treachery on the part of the car to glide on vigorously for about fifty yards and then stop dead. Kitty got out and dragged at the starting handle until her back ached; she was breathless when Costello, in leisurely fashion, strolled up to the inert motor.

Kitty begged him to go away at once. She knew how much he must desire to hurry. She twisted her tremblers, and banged her carburettor, and looked fiercely at her sparking plugs, all vainly.

Mr. Moroney hurled all his strength into turning the crank, with Kitty urging him to leave between each twist.

When, quite unheeding, he had twisted the outraged tremblers, taken off one plug and pronounced it clean, he lighted a cigarette and considered matters.

"It's three miles to Ballinmena," he said absently.

"And you," snapped Kitty, "will be late for your tea. What are you doing now? The front seat won't start the car."

For Mr. Moroney, suddenly smiting his head, had begun to wrest off the driving seat.

Costello said "No," but the petrol would, and he peered into the tank.

"Patsy," said Kitty heatedly, "sees to the petrol. He always——"

"There isn't even three drops," said Costello cheerily, "and no spare tin in the car."

Kitty's face grew red: for she remembered. She had told Patsy to wait for her at the garage where they were to have filled up the car. Even now Patsy was doubtless standing there, and she was miles from anywhere, not even sure of her road.

"The car will be quite safe here, and I'll ride back with a tin of spirit," said Costello. "And you'll have to take me with you in any case now, to show you the short way over the fields."

"But—Miss Gore," said Kitty, who felt suddenly lonely.

"Miss Gore——" Costello bit something off. "Come along now. I must leave the bike in a house."

The short cut to Ballinmena was curiously long. It trailed a devious way by a river bank, where the stream from Doonedurra had spread into something wide and shallow. Here Kitty heard how she was to catch trout in the spring, and which pools were best, and what flies to use, and then they turned towards the conical hill, going along a grass-grown lane which wandered nowhere between high hedges. It was curiously peaceful. The green country all round, no sound of life save the cattle and sheep, and sometimes the distant yap of a dog. They talked of many things strolling along.

They met Andy, seriously agitated, at the gate of Ballinmena.

"Patsy is just home in the pony trap," he said, "an' we were growin' anxious. It was only by luck he left the garage and walked up to the yard and found you gone."

Kitty acknowledged regretfully that she had forgotten her own directions.

The Deanes were out. Kitty said they would have tea with Andy in his little room.

"Mr. Moroney showed me a short cut," she said. "We came by the river, and I am very tired."

"And that was two miles out of your way," said Andy mildly. "If you had struck across by Neagle's bog now, you would have been here half an hour ago."

Costello, behind a lump of cake, murmured that he always thought the river way was the shortest; he met Kitty's suspicious glance with one of limpid innocence.

"There was the bog trench the other way," he said, "that we couldn't have jumped."

"With the new bridge over it," said Andy, a faint twinkle in his eyes. "Did you forget that too, Mr. Costello? Here's Father Con. Now what would he want to-day?"

Father Con for once did not want a horse for Monday. The black was whole and sound. But he came to borrow a pair of girths, and to speak a few words to Creina Casey, but he thought first of fox hunting.

"I was over to Longtoun this morning," he said. "I med it me bizness to make a sick call there. Signs by, the woman was away to town, an' I hear there's a great fox within. They do see him makin' in an' out

every day, himself an' three pups. I am wishful, Miss Adair, that Mrs. Deane should try me black horse now that he is well. The fence isn't built he can't throw behind him, an' he gentle as a doting old man."

Father Con would not be happy without a visit to the stables; he examined the bay horse, and all the colts, and he said, "My, my!" over the black mare's tendon, and he saw everything on four legs which he could find.

"The gran' life you have, Pattie," he said, "always with the hunters. There's meself now, sometimes ridin' to a berryin' with the hounds not six miles away, and a good horse tunin' himself to the time of a hearse. Well, well! there was the luck of the world at one berryin' last year, an' I on Father Dennehy's brown, when 'twas all over an' the hounds streamed past two fields away. There was no man born could hold the brown when he heard the tumult," said Father Con thoughtfully. "A good hunt we had up Cahermer Gorse, an' if it wasn't that it was Father Dennehy's hat I happened to lose an' I tearin' off the weepers, there wouldn't have been a word of unpleasantness. He was on his drivin' cob, an' he was bither enough about it all."

Costello brought Sadie back in a surprisingly short time, so that Kitty remarked the road would have been the shortest way of all. Father Con stood looking at horses until twilight fell.

"And Creina swept clean out of my head," he said suddenly. "She is out presently, is she, Honora? Well, well, another day. It's only her mother that is vexed with the way the girl is goin' on. Mothers is hard to be plazed anyways."

Father Con rode away on his bicycle, and Creina walked out of the barn.

"An' I waitin' here this half-hour pasht, an' she afraid to cross the yard," said Mrs. Madden. "The milk is all sot now, Creina, child; make in to Anne to lend her a hand."

Creina went in with a new look on her childish face. She was beginning to think for herself, and thought leads to independence.

The Deanes lunched at Gore Hall, where they heard several things about everyone else, and were shown a horse which it appeared was made for Kitty—a light-middled, washy chestnut, with bad hocks and back of its knees, but with a showy head and tail, and good action. The kind of brute to lie in a tangle on a narrow bank when he was tired, and to gallop through a wall when he was fresh.

His spurious quality caught Madge Deane's eye, and she urged Kitty to sell the brown and buy.

"That brown is far too big for my sister," Madge said loftily. "I told her so. He has given her one bad fall already, and was never a lady's horse."

"Andy says he was dead tired and it was all my own fault," said Kitty. "I don't like this tall horse."

Madge was pleased to hear from Colonel Gore that he liked to see a lady who really knew a horse. Feminine judges were rarely found. He had the chestnut out, and he put Lancelot up to ride it, until Kitty felt almost inclined to rush back to Ballinmena and lock the Treasure's door, as they all talked and advised her.

The day resulted in Madge's nearly purchasing a lumpy, tall bay, with no shoulders and doubtful feet, but new caution making her refuse to take it until

it passed a vet. Colonel Gore took her hurriedly to see something else. A conversation which took place between the grooms after she had left would have proved illuminating.

"Pass a vit—how are ye?" remarked Connell, the old groom. "With her ringed like a zebra from laminittes, an' a whistler as well. 'What she likes she'll buy,' the Colonel says to me this mornin', 'without worry,' says he, but ould Andy has sinse larnt to her. Shut him up, Ned. He'll go to the baker's van in the ind, afther all."

"And they wanted to make me change my Brownie, Mr. Andy, for a horrid red horse with a thin waist," said Kitty, flying to Andy when she got home.

"What he can't knock knocks him, I know that one," said Andy sapiently. "Leave him to eat up there, missie."

In answer to Madge's inquiries as to the bay, he replied drily that when Colonel Gore allowed the horse to be examined, it would be quite safe to buy him, for he knew that one also.

The hum of excitement at Fenessy's was mild compared to that at Ballinmena, when everyone went out hunting.

Patsy and Pattie lent and borrowed all the morning. Timmins found herself leaving her mistress's bell unanswered, while she polished a spur for Pattie. Honora Madden laid down her milk pails to rub a bridle. The place seemed to echo to the jingle of bits and hiss of zealous grooms.

Mrs. Cafferty had been up since five, and cooked six extra eggs and a mountain of bacon, because huntsmen was hungry things, an' wanted heartening. She had also produced a ham which lurked in

be-crumbed majesty ; had made what she called stir-about, and baked three varieties of cakes. This was the first morning on which everyone had started out together since Kitty's accident, and it was made a day of note.

But it was good to have clean rooms and air across the fields drifting in through open windows, and no mounds of dust in corners swept in them by Vi'let, no eggs spread wide on dubiously washed plates, and pallid American bacon deriving its only colour from a black frying-pan.

The meet was some distance away. Old Andy was to drive Kitty in his pony-trap, because Sadie would have to be left out derelict, and the draw was right away from the direction of Ballinmena.

The meet was at four cross-roads, with poor little houses clustered round them. Hills, smooth green, humped up to the east, with deeper patches of dull green where gorse clumps grew. Garvagh Woods showed dimly in the distance. The place was curiously lonely, only woke up by the hunt. Even the carts straying at long intervals on the stony road passed as intruders. And all round grass, golden green, faded green, dull green, with the high green banks fencing the fields. Scarcely one scar of plough across the pasture. A fox hunter's promised land, stretching and rolling unevenly to the foot of the distant hills.

To Kitty it was just hunting and nothing more, but Costello Moroney looked out across the country with a joy so keen that it was akin to pain.

"At times I feel that when I'm too old to ride over it I'd like to die and not grudge the youngsters the perfection of it," he said. "Looking at that,

the thought of age hurts one, Miss Adair. Better give it up altogether than drift to the stage of excuses when it's always something keeps us back, and we go away from the big fences we used to eat up, and always put to-morrow before to-day."

"Eh?" said Kitty blankly.

"When the old fellows think to-day's run doesn't matter, but they'll ride the next one as they used to," explained Costello. "My father's nerve went, an' he used to tell me the truth about it and regret it so bitterly. Here's Lancelot now, coming to offer to pilot you."

Lancelot fulfilled this prophecy. He explained the largeness of the country and the probable run of a fox and the danger of Kitty being hurt again; and he offered himself as guide and mentor.

Kitty refused with what she believed to be extreme tact.

"You see, you are very kind and you know all about it," she said, "but I want to practise jumping, so I had really better try to stay in the fields for the present."

"Them are terrible things you say to young Mr. Gore," said Andy mildly. "He went off with a face on him like a turkey-cock."

"But what," said Kitty, unaware of offence, "what was wrong with what I said?"

Andy's eyes twinkled. They left the road and jogged across some low-lying fields. Fresh horses disobeying the order not to gallop with extreme vigour; kicking, squealing, plunging, young fools and old showed their joy in the soft turf under their feet, the cool air in their nostrils, and the sight of the hounds pattering in front.

The gorse was a tiny one, but sheltered and quiet. Hounds disappeared over the high banks. People with dubious nerves eyed the formidable fences all round and remarked that the place had given up holding. Those who were brave enough to lack courage openly pointed out the line of gaps to the road, and the certainty of running to Garvagh if they found. Keen men and women watched the little gorse eagerly. Hounds had opened once and no more.

Colonel Gore remarked "Rabbits," and said the next draw would be Ballylusky, a big, straggling place where he would be much happier than where he was.

"They're away." Andy took the old grey by the head. "There's the fox, and they're out. Come, missie, hurry!"

Most people were taken by surprise; they woke to barge and bustle for the first gap and see hounds streaming away two fields to their left.

But Garvagh lay to the right, and a fox ought to go to Garvagh. Only a few pulled out left to catch hounds; the majority left a little behind decided to be clever.

Andy's grey slipped over a low bank, went fast across a rushy field, and a huge fence loomed in front. To Kitty all fences were alike. She galloped into it on Andy's heels, watched the old grey prop and spring and charge, and shoot off again, and felt the brown's great bound as he landed almost too far on in his zeal, and slipped a little getting off.

"Stea-dy!" Andy turned his head. "Don't gallop loose into big places. Steady him, or he'll be apt to fall. We've got them now."

Garvagh Woods, instead of getting nearer, dropped away. Absolutely racing, hounds flew over the soft pasture, they crossed a road and got on to lighter going, swinging sharp left again instead of the expected line.

The river shone silver just below them, twisting snake-like between low banks. To Kitty it was rushing into limitless space, with the joy of jumping those high fences, with the cool air on her heated face, the glory of the gallop thrilling through her blood, and hounds as something necessary which had to do with it all streaming ahead.

Her eyes were not as old Andy's, watching the flying pack; quick to see them bend; twisting the hardy grey with a light touch, ready to gallop when he must, but saving his horse, always watching closely.

"You always know what you've had, but you never know what you're going to have," Andy used to say with his eyes twinkling. "It isn't them that are first in a three-mile scurry that finishes long hunts."

There were only six people near hounds, and no fox could have stood up long at the pace he was being rattled along, but he turned sharply at a bridge and gained time to get ahead and give the best hunt of the year.

The clever people came straggling up on blow horses, inclined to be hurt by so much originality the line. Cleverer people hammered round the road and a countryman declared volubly that the fox was earthed in the side of the hill.

Derrick Knox Harding being led to the spot, said several things fiercely. The hole was a mere cranny in some rocks.

"Where a wren could not nesht," declared another breathless man who arrived at a run. "Could ye not have sinse, Martin Malone, not to be wild goosin' his honour up here?"

"If he did not go within he smhelt at it, Michael Enright," observed Mr. Malone sulkily, "for I seen him oberight me two eyes an' he bindin' down lookin' in. When I looked agin he was gone."

Here Derrick suggested sharply that if Mr. Malone himself was in the hole for ever, it would be an excellent thing, at which remark Martin Malone, unabashed, poked with a stick to try to make the place look larger and his call justified.

"An' anyways, he could not be within, for I ran down to say I met him above, and he makin' out for Ballingara cool an' aisy for himself. Up there beyant the big threes," gasped Michael Enright.

Here, if Michael Enright expected an outpouring of gratitude, he knew not the ways of Masters of Foxhounds. Instead, he was severely rebuked for not saying so at once instead of standing there jabbering, and that ten minutes had been lost, and several other things lost on the breeze as Derrick departed at a gallop.

"There's for ye now an' me heart busted to tell him," said Michael Enright, his face crimson with outraged wrath.

"God save ye! why wouldn't ye tell him at onst," snapped Martin Malone, "an' not be keepin' a huntsman dawdlin'?"

"Fain I tell ye the next time the fox passes me he *can* pass me," stormed Mr. Enright. "An' the sorro word I'll give him, but let him off an' lave his dogs hungered an' himself bither as weasels to lose the thrail—so I will."

Derrick signalled from the hill.

"The man is goin' wrong ways. Not by the threes. I'm comin', yer honour. I'll make it out for ye. I'll show ye the spot he wint on."

And Michael Enright, who had sworn silence, fled up the hill at a wilder run than he had come down at, using badly needed breath to shout directions as he came.

"There's for ye," said Martin Malone sourly. "If he was within here there'd be something for me to talk about, an' I wouldn't say he wasn't yet. Them foxes is like fairies."

Challenger spoke to it close to Michael Enright's pointing finger. Veteran and Vengeance confirmed Challenger.

Mr. Enright danced wildly as hounds dashed on.

"Success! Ye'll ate him yet. Thank yer honour. He is at the rocks be now if he isn't sittin' somewheres to cool himself."

At a steadier pace now hounds carried on for Ballinlena Rocks, about four miles further on. Over perfect country, springy green turf to gallop on, great green fences to canter at, sound, honest, safe, and hounds hunting perfectly. The heart of man who desired more could not be the heart of a sportsman, of the mad being who thinks the risking of himself and a valuable horse to keep near hounds is the best thing life holds. Hunting is clean, keen joy, with no alloy in it. With hope of the next day ever present when luck is out; with need of brain and nerve and judgment, and skill too, if man and horse are to finish a long hunt and finish it without a fall. Quickness to see a turn, to catch the silver gleam of wire ahead; thought for the way round or the way

out. And always above it all the keenness to keep with hounds.

A horse may carry us as well ; the country be as perfection ; the pace a cracker, but what is it all if one has possessed these things out of sight of the hunters of the hunted ? Woe to us when we suddenly grow careless and after a long check and a try in all directions, we say there is no chance of hitting it off, and pull up. Three minutes later, who has not known the misery of seeing hats bob from fields ahead, and a fleeting white patch streaming over green grass ? One had watched them so closely *until* that last minute when they hit it off. For then comes the stern chase with bitter wrath in one's heart for the folly which has left us out of perhaps the best bit of the hunt.

" You won't go blind, missie, always watchin' them," old Andy told Kitty, " and you'll see many more hunts than if you leave your watching to others."

At a fair pace they held on to Ballinlena Rocks, where eager countrymen were full of how the biggest fox ye ever seen came nosin' to the burrow, an' med off for himself, because there were min workin' in the quarry.

They were out of their own country now, and no man could say where they were likely to go. Horse after horse dropped out until the field grew select. Some people took wrong turns and would not come on, others fell, for the country was getting bigger, the ditches wider and deeper.

Kitty, her cheeks flushed by the wind, her whole being by rapture, thought foxes must never get tired, for they had been going for hours and hours.

Dark-shadowed, greyly cool, the Galties rose in front, raising their keen crests against a dappled sky. The fox was running short now, trying the thick hedges; more than once they thought he was sure to be lying down in one of them, but the stout old fellow had struggled on seeking for a hole. There was news of him often.

"He bate out an' the tail hangin' on him. He not tired at all but sthreakin' up for Gowla Gorse five mile off, cool an' aisy," so opinions varied.

The best of horses faltered a little now when asked to gallop, yet jumped as accurately as ever, if not as lightly; arching on to the wide green banks, springing generously off over the wide drains.

And then, a sudden crash from disappointed throats. The old fox had found sanctuary in a smooth green bank, getting in only just in front of hounds.

They had run over thirteen miles in a perfect but big country, and of the field which had started only about fifteen were with hounds at the end.

The hole the fox was in was reputed by the inhabitants to run half a mile or so till it opened below at Judy Daly's. There was nothing to do.

Kitty danced upon the short green grass, and wondered how people lived who did not hunt.

"They only think they live," said Kitty, hugging the hot brown horse, "because they don't really. And, oh, Noll, didn't you love it, every little gallop and bump and jump of it!"

Captain Deane observed somewhat sourly that he would have done so if his horse had not been stone-cold for the last four miles, and——

The interruption of "Oh, how funny! Mine is all steaming with heat!" being passed over with a

scathing look, he went on to say: "And also he had had to stop twice to get Madge over big places." "That new horse of hers is a coward," snarled Oliver Deane; "I've left them on the road now, and Madge is very cross."

"If you had to buy the one I advised," said Andy quietly; "I told you that little grey would never carry you, Captain. I knew he would give out with your weight."

Captain Deane sighed. He was beginning to doubt his wife's supremacy as a horse dealer.

"I'll swap him now," said Andy, "before the other goes, and you'll be able to finish hunts then, I tell you; the one you're on is no good, but a twelve-stoner won't carry thirteen in this country."

It was a long ride back to Ballinmena, over sixteen miles, and with extreme joy Kitty heard that Pattie and the pony were still out, "follyin' on."

Costello's young horse was going tender. When Pattie and the pony loomed on a by-road, Mr. Moroney asked for a seat. Pattie could drop the horse at a friendly farmer's, who would see him up to Doonedurra.

Miss Gore, who had cast up with Lancelot when it was all over, eyed the turn out with open disfavour. She beckoned to Kitty.

"Of course, you are new to it all," she whispered, "but old Andy is not—well—quite—you know—and you ought to ride home. Mr. Moroney then can get into our trap at Greenhill, and drive with me."

"And I should have to ride on alone," said Kitty blankly.

"My dear, it would be really more correct," said Elaine primly.

"There are no proprieties in heaven," said Miss Adair, "and it has all been heaven to-day; but you can take Mr. Moroney if you like; he doesn't pull the trap, so we don't want him."

"Dear me!" said Elaine, and rode on offended.

CHAPTER XI

"**T**HERE is great farmin' here," said Father Con. "I declare, Mat, ye are a risin' man."

Mat said nothing, but he looked a little drearily at a low stuffy shed in the corner of the yard where three of his best calves languished.

"I would not be sayin' that the badly saved hay is good for them," he said, half to himself. "There is three sick, Father, in there," he added, "an' they'll be a loss."

Father Con trusted piously that with the help of God the sickness would pass away. "We had a great hunt on Monday," he burst out. "I declare they went on and on and on, till you'd say they'd kill over the edge of the wurld, an' my black goin' great with me throughout."

"An' where did ye kill?" Mat asked; he forgot his sickly calves as he thought of hunting.

"He earthed in a bank two miles from Gowla," said Father Con disconsolately. "I was hopin' for a pad meself. The Masther could not fail but notice me, for I jumped agin him onst, an' with the force I met him I sent his horse over the far dyke; an' one time he swore at me, for with the eagerness of it an' the kind of a mouth the black has, maybe I *was* in the middle of them. So I hoped greatly for a pad, for he'd give the brush to a lady, but there's for ye.

An' another day when they do eat him I'll be in a ditch. Someone should win a race with that black. He is a fashionable lepper, I tell ye. Fashionable; an' I taught him."

"Anear Gowla?" Mat rubbed his head. "That was the terrible hunt, Father."

Father Con caught sight of Mat's aunt as she came in laden with eggs. He coughed and ceased rhapsodizing.

"That reminds me," he said uneasily. "Talkin' of uncertainties, Mat, an' hunting is that same, Creina's mother is complainin' ye to the nation, an' she spoke to meself on yestherday."

"Creina is wishful to come here," said Mat slowly, "an' I would keep her dacent."

Here Father Con became eloquent. What were a girl's wishes but, but—things of no account?—"like days up on Doone mountains where there was no chance of a hunt at all, an' if you did get one ye'd break your horse's leg in the heathery bog-holes. Not at all. It was the parents' wishes that were to be thought of, an' the parents' alone, as all good priests taught their flock. If Mat thought of Caseys he should only think of Mrs. Casey."

"I would not think of her with the wish to marry her, anyways," said Mat drily. "Ye might as well hang a church bell up in a house as put herself in it. But Creina, Father—— If the cattle gets on I'll take her in spite of thim," he said sturdily. "My money would be good as another's"

Father Con poked the pig away from him, and compared Dromin with Mat's cottage.

"An' the end comes as sweet a' the same under thatch as undther slates," said Mat. "If I haven't

the grandjer I have the comfort, Father, an' snug rooms within, if there was money to buy the bits for them."

Father Con, having spoken, lost interest in the subject; he got onto a bank and peered across at the covert lying dull green amid the bog.

"Well, maybe so, Mat, maybe so," he observed absently. "I tell ye, I would have liked a bit of that fox an' I goin' so great," said Father Con regretfully, "but maybe I did be too close to them. I had buried that poor Nancy Donellan that was took by the motor the day before, an' little Dickie Sweeney that often held a horse for me, and with the change of air and all I was too venturesome. 'I am only afraid they will go,' I says to himself, when he ate me. 'That's just what it looks like,' says he, but bitter as weasels. I smiled at him then, and it was not until we had another mile got over that I saw the ugly way he meant it, and I to smile back so easy at him. But he is a terror after a fox," went on Father Con briskly, "an' the best in the world when he's not twisting his tongue at you. Well, good evening, Mat. Mind what I came to say to you."

"I'll think of it, Father, an' they drawin' the gorse on Friday," said Mat humbly.

Half-way across to Andy's Father Con stopped and looked back.

"The gorse," he said, grinning, "an' it only now I to see what he meant. That's twice the wits have been slow with me."

Andy was giving orders in his untidy yard. A new calf shed had to be built. It would not be finished before he left. He feared mistakes in the making; that something was sure to go wrong. Father Con,

of course, wanted a horse for Friday. The blandly innocent expression on the curate's face told that.

Andy was flustered, and for him irritable.

"He is there for you, Father. I am in a hurry with the house," he said.

"What is there for me?" observed Father Con.

"What, Andy? It isn't one wantin' prayers is it?"

"It's one I hope won't say them." The twinkle returned to Andy's eyes. "Danny, if McMahon skimps an inch of the brickwork say you'll let me know by the wireless post. Remember now."

"I will, sir," said Danny dutifully.

"That is a wonderful thing," observed Father Con, "to be blastin' words across the world; they shakes them in off the high poles, I am told—I seen them at Queenstown—an' with the power of the send-off they go tremblin' to foreign parts."

"But they would not do to taik secrets on," said Andy thoughtfully, "for any fellow that has whatever it is ready, can shake out the send-off and read it for himself. What's that, Danny? What did you say?"

Danny, contemplating the sky, remarked that it was quare work entirely.

"I would not say but that the devil himself had a hand in it," he said thoughtfully, "I would not. It is worse than them soort of windmills that floats in the air be petrol. Didn't one come fallin' into me uncle's haggart above in Kildare only lasht Sunday week?"

"An' any killed?" said Father Con breathlessly.

"A big duck he had, an' the pig," said Danny regretfully. "An' he fat too, the craythur."

"But the driver?" said Father Con.

"Me uncle didn't say a word about him, an' he writin'," said Danny. "Maybe he was med bits of, too small to find, or that he cot a three befour the fall. It was the pig that throubled him, an' it fat, the poor animal."

Andy's eyes twinkled softly.

"I would not say the driver could be there altogether, or alive," added Danny, after a pause, "or the pig's price wouldn't be throublin' me uncle so greatly. Whin we were med heavy we were intended for the airth, and to be up apin' the birds is agin nathur, Father, so we falls down."

"I came——" said Father Con.

"I tell you he is right," interrupted Andy. "You should sell that black, Father, he is terrible unlucky."

"The December Fair, please God," said Father Con, his freckled face brightening. "There is no use to be ornamenting him any more now with that so close, an' he so delicate on his tendons. He carried me great last time. If you'd give me a cup of tea, Andy—'twas that I come for."

"Oh, of course; if you can't get out on Friday, I'll give Pattie the bay," said Andy, going in. "Tea, Anne, for his reverence."

"Will he wait on the hot cakes for the gentry, or have what there is?" asked Anne, poking out her thin little face.

Father Con said he would wait.

Someone slipped across the kitchen and out, with a courtesy, and an averted head.

"That is Creina; she is afeared you will be at her," said Anne Cafferty. "An' she is the height of sperrits, the craythur."

A distant, uneven thrumming proclaimed the

return of Kitty Adair. She brought the car to a stand in the yard with an extended spark, which caused a resentful bang from the exhaust.

"Fit to bile eggs, she is," said Patsy, removing the top of the radiator. "Fetch me a can of wather, Pattie, or the car'll be destroyed. She should go aisy, miss, up the boteen."

"It's the ainess does it," said Kitty crossly. "And she won't pull on all her twiddle things. She was missing in two to-day, though I was at them for ages."

"Isn't she disagreeable now," said Patsy sympathetically, "not to plaze ye? The Captain is not home, miss."

So Kitty went to tea with Andy and Father Con. The pile of hot cakes disappeared so fast that it seemed unlikely that any would be left for the Deanes. Father Con declared that he had never met their like.

"I would have been back before," said Kitty, "but the car went out. I—bumped into a ditch, and I couldn't wind her up. A man with a sick cow did it; poor thing, it couldn't walk well, and it had such a cold."

Andy looked up swiftly.

"Couldn't walk?" he said. "Where would it be, missie?"

Kitty described the place vaguely. It was somewhere near a three-cornered patch of trees with a stream running by them.

"That is Nat Sweeney's," said Andy. "Couldn't walk, couldn't she—that cow?"

"He put her into a shed," said Kitty, "the man. He seemed very unhappy about her."

"God send it is not the foot and mouth," said Andy. "There have been cases near Dublin."

"An' Nat was away to stay with his cousin up above there," chimed in Father Con; "he brought back a bunch of them ordinary heifers to improve the milk he sells."

"This was an Alderney," said Kitty, "a pretty kind of yellowy cow."

Creina, relieved of fear of scoldings, was helping old Marty to weed his wallflower beds. She was looking bright and happy; the release from home and the hopes for Mat's prosperity had banished her fears.

"If it runs through a place, they'll slaughter your all, and leave you shipped," said Andy impressively. "What they gives is nothin'. I've read of it before. My! if it chanced to come to poor Mat over."

Creina's head went up; she came near the window.

"He'd be done for," went on Andy, "with all that stock bought on borried money. God send you made a mistake, little missie, and that it was a hurt cow ye saw over beyond."

Creina let a particularly fine specimen of groundsel fall back on the wallflowers. What was this they were talking of? The foot and mouth. She had heard her father talk contemptuously of the terrorism of the authorities, whereas in his young days they had treated and cured the disease.

"Fed them by pushin' stuff down," he said, "an' watched them. They'd improve. I only saw two losht above in O'Brien's big herd; but now where are ye? They slaughter all ye have."

"They slaughter all ye have." Creina stepped across the little patch of garden to the boreen from

which she could see Mat's house. The cattle were grazing there peacefully. She could see Mat moving among them in the fodder cart. Worth so much, and——

Creina looked back at Ballinmena.

If this fell disease came here. If it spread through the country—— If Mat lost his all—and more than his all——

Creina leapt over the bank, leaving her dress in the thorns; she scudded half-way to Mat's, and then stopped and went slowly back. Why should she frighten him?

"What is it ails ye now?" snapped Mrs. Madden, rolling past with a milk pail. "I declare to the hevins ye look as if he met himself out on the fields. Ye're not fairly luck, are ye, Creina?" Mrs. Madden stopped sudden. "Ye didn't see a man on a horse, or the like, child, did ye? There's Father Con handy if ye did."

"I did not," said Creina dully, taking a pail.

"For me mother's aunt down in Tipperary, that was what she met," said Honora, crossing herself. "She seen him plain, an' she sat out all night, dazed-like in the cowl'd, bewitched as she was. And she was never well agin. Pains in her bones he put, and thrimblin's, and a cowl'd fayver in her blood', and so she wint. They nelt up all the doors and even stuffed the chimbley the night she wint, an' she bawlin' for air, the craythur, through the charrum he had laid on her, but Father Donnellan saw to it all, God rest her. There was some said that she had drink taken and that it was Nattie Nagle's white jennet she saw, but they knew bether down there. If ye see one of *thim*, Creina, bless yerself before ye have time to

count three. That forth beyant is a quare place I tell ye. Little Dickie Kennedy plucked primmyroses there lasht spring, and he gone now."

"He caught a cowld an' he droundin'," said Creina dully.

Mrs. Madden sniffed. "An' who gave him the shove to be on the way of droundin'?" she asked stormily. "Whin Danny here pulled him out he said there was no rayson for the bye to thrip on the plank bridge. Don't be mockin' *thim*, Creina, asthore. They might be around."

Creina milked dolorously, big tears brimming in her pretty eyes. When the milk went into the great pans in the cool dairy she told Honora of her trouble.

The wail of anguish with which it was greeted did not help to raise Creina's spirits. The cows were Honora's children now.

"The spotty cow, if she were swep," groaned Honora, "an' the little Kerry, Daisy, an' Sweetie beyant. I will have somethin' over in the mornin'," said Honora; "a bottle of blessed wather will kape us safe anyways for a bit, an' aft'er I'll see to the resht."

Creina's eyes brightened. She could ask for some of this, and save Mat too.

The kitchen at Ballinmena was torridly busy that night, for the Moroneys had come over late, and were staying on to dinner. Anne heard it with dismay.

Creina heard her name called wildly.

"An' only two ducks for the dinner an' the cod fish, an' jam tarts. We'll be disgraced," wailed Mrs. Cafferty; "but lift down the tins, Creina, till we see what we'll find. I have a sthore of tickle-me-throats laid in."

Mrs. Cafferty proved that she remembered her cooking, if not quite in the right places, when a seven-course dinner was taken in.

Her cod, for example, blushed in lobster sauce ; the egg cutlets had neatly stripped feathers to represent bones. The jam tarts were backed up by three other hurriedly made sweets.

"The one lot that looks enough," muttered Mrs. Cafferty, peering in at the array of pastry and hot puddings.

And there came one unbidden sweet ; an omelette for a savoury, but filled with strawberry jam in her flurry.

Costello Moroney earned her eternal favour by eating a large helping.

"Onions, parsley, and jam aren't too bad at all," said Costello gravely. "Don't you worry, Mrs. Cafferty. It's splendid."

They were a cheery little party, sitting in the long-disused best parlour of Ballinmena. Peat glowing golden red in the grate.

Madge Deane was the least enthusiastic of the party, as they talked of hunting and runs and people ; there was a chill corner in her mind containing the memory of her deal with Timsy Henessy, for the black mare had broken down badly.

Yet Madge talked loftily of horses ; she corrected her husband's opinions, and she simply passed Kitty's as idiotic, but she did it with an undercurrent of irritation.

"We could not really have afforded the trip if we did not mean to make it pay for itself," said Madge, eyeing Oliver coldly. He was looking at the fire with an expression which she could not fathom.

"When you first take to buying and selling horses," said Costello, "what you ought to see is what you can afford to lose. You don't know what horses are right for a strange place, or who you're dealing with, or anything. Those horses you've bought now," said Costello, unaware of the fiery flush uprising in Madge's face, "would probably be right where you've come from, but they are too small for this place. Miss Adair, now, bought the right one."

"But they'll sell," said Oliver Deane uneasily.

"Andy's grey will; your bay is never a dealer's horse, and—bless me! what's that?"

It was only Kitty knocking down some books. As Mr. Moroney picked them up, he heard "Idiot!" breathed fiercely into his ear. Costello stroked his upper lip, and looked for more books.

"Idiot!" said Miss Adair; "do you want to come here again?"

Mr. Moroney looked at his hostess. With a silky tactfulness which no one would have given him credit for, he appeared to carry on the conversation from where it had ceased at bookfall, but now he seemed to realize how the buying of horses could be made quite profitable by a really clever young lady. He spoke quite enthusiastically of the craze for small horses in other counties, and by the time Anne Cafferty had brought in a tray laden with tea, whisky and soda, sandwiches, and the rest of the jam tarts, Madge was quite affable again.

They passed from talking of hunting to the state of the country; a shadow fell on Costello's face.

"Land is ruin nowadays," he said shortly.

Miss Moroney shook her great head sympathetically.

"But Mr Gore said Doonedurra was worth quite

a lot," burst out Kitty. "He told me so, even just to let for cattle-eating."

The shadow on Costello's face deepened to a black squall.

"Oh, he did, did he?" said Moroney, through set teeth.

"And that you ought to be quite rich there," prattled on Kitty; "better off than they are."

"I am never likely to be rich there." Moroney's mouth twisted oddly. "Never, Miss Adair. Come, Aunt Mary, I'll get the trap."

The meet was far away next day. It was bitterly cold, a north wind tearing leadenly across a steel-grey sky. Whipping the chilled world with its lash, with one half-mocking hand held out to the west, and only waiting to join forces with her to bring down storms of bitter rain.

Bad days are fated to be in bleak spots; they met at four cross-roads, by a grey, wind-swept farmhouse; and jogged cheerlessly to the heather-grown hill humping above them to the east. There was no protection, on the side they drew, from the whooping wind. It raced along the high banks, bending the tops of the heather, the trees in the square covert tossed as things in torture; the tops of young larch and pine waving and bending; a whine, as of what they endured, coming from them.

There was a leaden chill in it, a leaden prophecy in the massing clouds which hung above.

Andy was not out. He had lent Kitty a young and gentle chestnut, telling her to ride it carefully on the hills.

They found on Castlerock, and ran out straight into the grip of the cold. Found, and circled round,

and ran backwards and forwards, never going fast enough to get warm.

Kitty had put on a thin covert-coat; she knew that her face was dyed purple.

The fox got back to covert, and the field humped their backs in the shelter of trees, believing themselves warm because for a minute they stood out of the wind. Kitty backed on close to the wall, shivering. Miss Gore, thickly veiled, came to stand beside her. Elaine was too plump to feel cold, and her veil hid her wind-tinted complexion. She looked pityingly at Kitty, as she asked why she wore no veil, and was not more warmly dressed.

Kitty merely shivered. She wanted to go home and get near a fire.

A hound spoke in covert, but no one turned their head; if a hill fox did not go at once, it was unlikely that he ever would, and there was practically no scent.

Elaine looked peevishly at the small field; she wished that she had stayed by the fire, and said so.

"Costello told me that he would be out," she remarked, as though she would not have come so far if she had not arranged a meeting.

"He said he was saving his horse for Wednesday," said Kitty. "He is going to train down for once."

Elaine Gore smote her saddle sharply. "For once," she sniffed. "If Costello were not a fool and a regular fool, I know, because Lancelot saw him meeting her once—but it's all over long ago—and to go on wasting money—— But it can be stopped," snapped Elaine, the light of battle in her eyes.

"She—who?" said Kitty blankly.

"An impossible person," said Miss Gore.

Listening with some bewilderment to a rambling

story, Kitty gathered that this Impossible Person had come to Doonedurra about five years ago; that Costello would say nothing about her then, but that he sent her an allowance—sent away money which would have made him quite comfortable.

Lancelot had found all this out, in some mysterious way. The I.P.—Kitty made it that for short—had come a short time after the disappearance of Elliot Moroney, the second son. He, it appeared, was also an impossible person of the male sex, and had died in America. But it could be stopped—Kitty gathered that Miss Gore meant to see to that.

"The aunt is useless," said Elaine, "since she lost her fiancé. He was killed out hunting."

Kitty said "Oh!" and understood why Eleanor Moroney had whispered so sadly about a "morning just as this is."

"Yes: they carried him into Doonedurra. He was riding her horse, and she has been quite absurd and would never hunt again, or even ride, and has no real influence for good over Costello."

Kitty felt the leaden chill of the rain-heavy wind strike through her. She shivered in dull misery, sat silent as Miss Gore prattled on. In strictest confidence, of course, and not one word to be mentioned. "And that beast is off again," said Elaine sourly, "we shall have to go on out into the wind."

The chestnut, as chilled as his rider, stumbled and slipped in the rough ground, essayed some half-hearted bucks on the side of a steep descent, sidled and pulled and fidgeted, and was as unpleasant a mount as any benumbed girl could wish for.

A lash of bitter rain fell suddenly, and lifted again, but the evil grey clouds had fallen lower, and the

hand stretched to the west wind had been gripped at last.

Madge Deane gave it up when they crossed the road between the hills for the sixth time. They trotted back to the car—Kitty had taken a lift to-day—and fled homewards. Ballinmena had never looked so comfortable; the turf and wood fire so warm; and Mrs. Cafferty's tray of tea so blissfully welcome; but Kitty was curiously unappreciative. Her numbed fingers would not undo her habit. Timmins, coming to help, said crisply that she considered "'unting on a bad day's mad folly. Unless you had it arranged for a fox to start away immediately, and keep your blood in circulation," said Timmins. "I should think a dragged fox now, miss, should be procured by the organizer in inclement weather."

Timmins was learning a certain amount from Patsy, and had even driven in the pony-trap to a meet. Timmins had extended her education. She could do one top boot while Patsy did the other. She was quite expert with a pink coat; the bits which she sometimes burnished would be right enough and they "shobbered a taste," Patsy said.

Patsy had also learnt how to clean suede shoes; how to hang up skirts; and several other things; and Timmins was quite resigned to Ballinmena.

Kitty changed slowly; she was standing by her fire when Creina knocked.

"The tay being up below, miss, and Mrs. Cafferty thinkin' ye might want help. My! but ye look cowl'd," said Creina sympathetically. "I wouldn't say but the day has ye sickened. 'Tis awful entirely now."

Creina turned and flew away. She was back in a minute with a cup of steaming tea.

Her nimble, sun-burnt fingers fastened Kitty's blouse.

"That tay will hearten ye, miss," said Creina shyly; her voice sounded tired, and her eyelids were heavy. Kitty noticed it suddenly. She asked the reason.

"I am afeared, miss," said Creina, "afeared that some misfortin may come to Mattie. I dreamt of bats lasht night, an' Honora's dream-book says bats is misfortin; an' a hare crossed me this mornin'. Honora said she wasn't a right hare. An' I'm afeared," muttered Creina.

Kitty's appetite for hot cakes failed completely that evening; she was curiously silent, and allowed her sister to tell them all she knew about horses without one mocking remark. Madge had seen a bay four-year-old which she coveted greatly. He was big enough. The man said he was a jumper. She had watched him on the hill.

"Clipped and trimmed," said Madge, "he would be beautiful."

Oliver Deane, absorbed in the bliss of warmth and tea, agreed thoroughly. He had looked from watering eyes at something on the heather.

"Had he got a man in a grey tweed cap on him?" said Kitty, waking up when she had been asked three times if she had seen the horse. "A weaselly-looking little man with a red nose—a farming man; the horse was a yellow bay."

Madge replied tartly that the new treasure had carried a small farmer; she had not studied his nose.

"Then that horse has got spavins," said Kitty.

"for I heard the priest who was out say so. I was listening to him talking. 'I'm afraid Nat Dempsy is married to that one,' he said, and he nodded towards that horse, 'for he has two terrible spavins and he won't sell him a screw's price. Isn't the misfortune for him?' What are spavins, Madge? It was a good thing you didn't buy the beast."

Madge Deane, when her husband asked her how it was she had missed seeing them, first told Kitty not to be a childish idiot, and next snappily replied that the man never rode away from her, and how could she see them? "He warranted it sound in its wind," said Madge, "and I saw it had splendid forelegs, and I've almost promised to take it." There were tears in Mrs. Deane's eyes.

Then Oliver Deane proved that he was worthy of the position of a husband by remarking enthusiastically that it would be a great hunter if they had to take it, full of quality and so big, and that Madge was always right.

"Sixteen three," said Madge, recovering, "that was why I wanted it—but spavins! Oh! why did he keep it that way?"

Kitty languidly suggested Andy's help. Andy came in, his eyes twinkling when he heard the tale. He knew all about the mealy bay, and also about his spavins.

It appeared that the owner was a friend of his. "So, if you still fancy him, I think he'd sell with a discount for those ornaments," said Andy. "I'll be over there in the morning. You might do worse for about thirty pounds, Mrs. Deane; he's a well-bred horse, and jumps a bit."

The thought of a hundred and twenty—which she

had been willing to give—crisped chilly down Madge Deane's spine. She was really put out. She looked furtively at her husband with a blend of apology and defiance, faintly flavoured by confusion. As a judge of horses she was failing just a little in Ireland.

"To look at a horse means nothing, so don't you worry," observed Andy; "he is a good screw, and——"

"There is one Nat Dempsy outside," announced Patsy, coming to the window, "with a horse he says the Captain bought from him. A bay horse with a pair of spavins on him."

Mrs. Deane sat down gloomily. Her face was very pink, and tears were again in her eyes.

"You can leave him to me," said Andy placidly. "His brother is after a job, and I have to ask Mr. Fitz for it, but he may hold out for more than the horse is worth now, as you've gone so far. Leave it all to me."

The Deanes and Kitty clustered behind the window-curtains as the note of a heated voice rose and fell outside, with interludes of low-toned remarks from Andy.

"Bought him straight away I tell ye. Oberight Marty Condon. An' if he has spavins, hasn't his bethers the same? Hadn't she eyes in her head, Andy Quin, hadn't she? Downright, she was."

The voices went further off, and then drifted nearer again, Andy's always inaudible.

"An' if I would be glad of thirty a month ago, Andy Quin, was I to know there'd be thim without knowledge trown at me head on the mills? Thirty! me aunt! an' she buyin' him outright, very determined in herself."

"He will make us pay," said Madge hysterically.

Silence fell, and presently Andy appeared, quite unruffled.

"I told him to take the horse away," he said, the twinkle bright in his old eyes, "an' not dare to do down friends of mine; but to save all trouble the horse is outside and Nat's in the kitchen waiting for fifty pounds. He is a good sort of a horse, and might be worth some of it."

Oliver Deane wrote a cheque slowly. He was beginning to wonder where the profits at the end of the hunting season were to come from.

Madge did sums upon a bridge-marker for the rest of the evening, scratching out the totals with peevish energy as she finished each one, and then beginning afresh until she finally remarked that nothing ever added up right, and went to her room in a temper.

Kitty was left alone, sitting over the fire, looking into it a little wistfully. She was very young, and she was not satisfied with the world. The picture of Miss Gore at Doonedurra did not please her.

"She will ruin the old place," muttered Kitty irritably.

Creina came in with turf for the fire; a frightened-looking Creina, her eyes wide and bright.

"It is the foot an' mouth, Miss Kitty, that ye saw," she whispered. "I hear there's two more sick now, an' Sweeney is hidin' them away. Old Tom Duggan that has a charrum an' went to try an' cure them, lit it out an' he drunk. Wasn't Sweeney mad to give him money, knowin' he melts ivery penny he gets into whisky?"

Kitty, ignorant but sympathetic, wished to know why Creina was so much upset.

"With all Mat's bastes beyant," whimpered Creina. "An' if it spreads along—I'm toul't it is a fearsome complaint—bad as maysles."

"An'—" Creina squatted before the fire, beating down the turf—"me mother is at me always lately, Miss Kitty, an' I'm afeared I'll be married an' all before the summer."

Mrs. Henessy was urging on the match, for money grew so short at Dromin that Creina's fortune was wanted to uphold a tottering house. Timsy, flaunting finely, was no farmer: his gay clothes absorbed money which ought to have gone for other things; he was wasteful, careless; proud of thirty or forty pounds profit made on a doctored horse, and oblivious of the many forty pounds his farm might have yielded.

Creina sighed and went away. The softness of the winter's night clung foggily to the world; the rain had swept away the cold; there was no sting now in the wet wind, no threat in the velvet-grey clouds drifting swiftly overhead. Creina threw on her shawl. Mat was idle when the dusk fell and an idle man cannot be blamed for seeing to his fences when they divide his land from other people's, and meeting someone there as he does so.

But to-night as Creina slipped into the grass-grown lane, she was confronted by Mr. Timsy Henessy, who was slightly drunk, and more than slightly irritable.

Creina's violent twist away from his affectionate grasp did not soothe his mind.

"High an' mighty we are," growled Timsy, lurching in pursuit. "I was up to yer mamma's to see ye, Creina, an' we have it med up that service at Andy Quin's is no place for ye now."

Creina's heart thumped with fear. She was free at Andy's, free to see Mat, and away from her mother's carping tongue.

"I can airn the good penny here," she faltered. "Two pound I have now. . . Andy gave it to me the day."

Timsy wanted two pounds particularly to take to Moylish races next day. He stared moodily at the girl he was to marry; her fresh prettiness made no appeal to him and he thought he was selling himself cheaply. But Timsy was cunning.

"I could persuade yer mamma to let ye stay," he muttered, "if ye weren't so stand off, Creina. The money is not bad. Ye haven't it on ye, Creina, have ye? I'm short of change, an' away airy to-morry."

It was in Creina's pocket, and speedily produced. The girl was no fool, but she was willing to sacrifice all her earnings if the sacrifice gained time for her at Andy's.

Timsy took it greedily. He was very short of ready money.

The pound of a horse driven fast made him turn his head; through the dusk he saw his mother's car with that lady peering anxiously down the lane.

"Timsy! I heard ye were here, and called for ye. An' Con is after tellin' me ye have never done the calves that I warned ye about. Ye'll get the stuff first thing to-morrow, Timsy, an' do them without fail."

"I will so," said Timsy meekly, omitting to mention the races.

Old Andy, strolling in about a week later, had news for Creina.

"There is holy war above at Dromin," he said to

her. "Timsy forgot to inoculate the calves, an' he lost ten to-day with the black quarter. He is a fine farmer I'm afeared, Crenia. He stayed two days at Moylish races, borryin' money to lose." Andy's eyes were void of twinkle as he looked at Creina.

"I'm thinkin' they want yer money up there, child," he said gloomily, "and the old one is that cliver she'll let no one know till she's got it."

"They might niver get it," whispered Creina hopefully.

CHAPTER XII

MISS ELAINE GORE thought that the drawing-room at Doonedurra might be made quite pretty. She lolled back in an old chair, smoked a cigarette, and confided her ideas to Kitty, who was curiously silent.

"One could cover up most of those shabby things," said Elaine—they were waiting for Miss Moroney to come in from the garden—"and put away the worst of the furniture; I hate that craze for bygone glories; and get smart china cabinets for the good china. I should get some goldy Japanese screens, they're so light, and aiter all. But Miss Moroney likes the memories of the past and things grandpas have sat in."

Kitty still said nothing. The room was very shabby but with a beauty of its own. Kitty loved the furniture, sadly as it wanted polishing and even mending.

"One could fix up that big conservatory, too," went on Elaine briskly, "and have tea there. But when Costello is so absurd, not keeping his money, no wonder the place looks so awful. Here they are."

Costello's voice sounded outside. "I couldn't afford one, Auntie; we'll have to patch up the old trap somehow. Oh, I know it will fall to pieces some day soon, and drop me through; but I can't ask Mr. Sweeney to give me a new one, and I know I could never pay for years."

"But the bay horse's price," said Miss Moroney.
"Some of that——?"

"That's all gone," said Costello shortly. "Hullo, we've visitors!"

Kitty's motor was waiting crookedly at the hall door, its radiator still steaming furiously; he went to examine it.

"If you'd pour a little cold water into that car," said Costello mildly, when he greeted Kitty, "and sometimes see that she was oiled, she'd be ever so much cooler."

Kitty replied loftily that Patsy had oiled the motor, for she had asked him to before she left.

"He did—with paraffin," said Costello drily; "the whole thing reeks of it, and it's red hot." He stroked his chin thoughtfully, as he thought of what could be done for the return journey.

They walked round the old place; the trees beautiful under a light veil of frost, more fog than frost, not enough to crisp the pools, but hanging in delicate tracery on the bare branches; the river tumbling and foaming in chilly silver, with a hint of steel in its depths. The huge garden squares had been laid down in grass, with only one kept in use; there were gaps in the crumbling walls where fruit trees had once leant and flourished; the cow-houses were empty, half the stables falling into ruin.

Kitty looked at it all with manifest disapproval. If there was money, why not use it to patch the place up?

"The poverty of the land." Costello Moroney had asked Kitty to come on to see a young horse, and he read her looks. "You think it all will fall down soon, eh, Miss Adair?"

"I think you might try to keep it together," said Kitty snappily; "the longer you leave it the worse it will get."

"But—if I cannot do anything? If I am unable to——"

Kitty's sniff was accusative.

"Has someone told you that I could?" he said softly. At nineteen the face is a mirror. Costello laughed a little bitterly.

"When there is someone to keep one must keep them," he said, half to himself, and then started. "Eh, what did I say? I am really too poor to keep the place up, so I let it slide altogether."

Kitty's cheeks flamed. She felt as if the impossible person was being waved before her eyes. If Elaine was going to put Costello's house in order, she would require determination and courage. Kitty sniffed again, haughtily this time, and Elaine, with her grey shoes and stockings bearing memories of the wet yards, tripped round the corner of the outhouse with a proprietary look in her eyes.

She said, irritably, that she called the place a morass, and that surely broken stones to fill holes with must be easily procured.

"When I go on the roads in despair I'll send a few up here," said Costello blandly. "I could put them down after hours."

"One of the nicest places in the county, and you don't care a bit for it," said Elaine; but her voice had a wait-and-see note in it which Kitty was quick to catch. It was evident that Elaine Gore had quite made up her mind to rule at Doonedurra and to completely reform the present state of affairs.

Elaine had money of her own left to her by a

loving aunt; she intended to marry Costello and endow him with it.

Kitty walked on briskly to stare earnestly at the rotting body of an old cart and the melancholy skeleton of an ancient mowing machine. She stood looking moodily at them.

"Interesting," said Moroney's voice behind her, "aren't they? No? Elaine's marooned under the hay barn; unless she pulled that bottle-necked skirt above her knees she couldn't do the ruts. You hopped across to get here, you know."

Kitty turned to contemplate the figure of Miss Gore as she skirted up and down the hay barn, scanning the wide muddy ruts in the haggart which lay between her and the others.

"Bottle-necked!" said Kitty reprovingly.

"Like those flasks of Italian stuffs," said Costello absently, "with a pair of feet fixed at the neck part. I tell you there'd be no chance for the men now if the women competed in sack races, for they practise the steps of it all the year round."

Kitty, with an unfashionable freedom of limb, leaped part of the cart, and scrambled through a gap in the wall.

"You go back to Miss Gore and carry her in," she said, swinging off towards the house. "I am going to talk to your aunt."

Miss Moroney was helping to get tea, taking out old silver and the cups from a cupboard.

"Mary Anne would smash them in a week," she said to Kitty, "and I love the Lowestoft set; also Mary Anne is shaping the cutlets for dinner because dear old Biddy always sends up things as big as legs of mutton. 'What bite is there in them atomies?' she

says contemptuously, and Elaine looks so pained if everything is not quite as it ought to be. Elaine is superior," added Miss Moroney, sighing.

Kitty helped with the gaily painted cups, little, stemless roses dotted over them; she laid them ready on an old silver tray, touching them softly.

Miss Moroney put a huge bunch of violets on the table, and sighed again.

"If Costello would only——" she began. "If he'd only keep something more for the place; but he doesn't." The gentle old face grew very sad.

Kitty began to think that Mr. Moroney needed slapping.

"I can help so little," said Miss Moroney, "and things are getting very bad."

"He even takes help from his poor aunt," raged Kitty's inner consciousness, "while he gives allowances to Impossible persons——"

Elaine's voice could be heard outside. She was evidently very angry about something and was saying so.

"I couldn't help it," observed Costello at the door. "I offered to turn my back while you jumped across the place, and you might have known you'd fall in if you tried to do it in a hurry with your dress down. I warned you—now you blame me."

Elaine was exceedingly muddled: the difficulties of her skirt had been too much for her across a deep, water-filled rut, or old drain, and she was now reproaching her host bitterly for her fall into it.

Kitty sat close to Miss Moroney; she talked to her and left Elaine completely to Costello. When, after tea, Elaine carried Costello off to his den to see some flies which he was making, Kitty began to find out how

difficult conversation can be, and what very inappropriate answers an absent mind can make to unheard remarks and questions.

Kitty's youthful mind was up in arms against her host. She determined not to talk to him out hunting any more, or to take his advice about the car, or her riding, or, in fact, about anything. She meant to ignore him and leave him to Miss Gore. She told herself that she was tired of him.

"And he practically saved her life," said Miss Moroney, finishing the story of a rescue out hunting.

"Yes—horrid of him," murmured Kitty, who was staring out of the window at a gap in the iron palings.

Miss Moroney remarked, "Oh!" in tones of astonishment. "But why?" she inquired mildly.

"Because I feel sure he need not," began Kitty. "Oh, I am so sorry: you were saying——?"

A dramatic story repeated is as a fallen omelette. Miss Moroney gave hers again a little coldly.

When Kitty got up to go, a fine rain had commenced to fall, drenching the already sodden land; the steely grey of the river was changing to brown. She struggled with her hood until she decided to leave it down and get wet, and then remembered that the car was not lubricated, and that she must get oil.

At this point Costello, saying something about good-byes, ran down the steps with a long-nosed bottle in his hands, and wondered what effect best linseed oil would have upon a motor's works.

"Nothing else in the place," said Costello. "Auntie came to tell me you were going. But I hope this will do, and you said something about driving round to Cantillon's for a whip of yours which he picked up; don't go across the ford; it's not safe to-day."

"If I don't it's about eight miles," said Kitty haughtily. "It will be dark, and I've no carbon in—Oh, carbide! I know: but it's quite the same if it isn't there, isn't it?"

Costello said "Certainly," quite meekly, but he again begged Kitty to take the upper road. "If you must go at all," he said. "I can lend you a whip for to-morrow."

Miss Adair said "No, thanks!" haughtily. Elaine on the door-step thought cheerfully that she would have to stay the night if it went on raining.

"We can play cut-throat bridge," she said cheerfully, "and I left a frock here last time. Poor Miss Adair—all alone."

"Will you start her, please," said Kitty icily, "and not give me any more advice?"

"That's rude," said Mr. Moroney, looking up from the handle. "Will you apologize?"

"Certainly not—never," snapped Kitty, her hand on the lever.

"When I'm not straight in front of your car I'll make you," said Mr. Moroney firmly.

The car spluttered and missfired as if paraffin and linseed oil mixed had not agreed with her. She showed a lack of power as she climbed the hill towards the gate, and if Kitty had not been asked not to she would certainly have gone back to Ballinmena as fast as she could.

But she wanted her whip, and by crossing the shallow ford it was only two miles out of her way to the Cantillons'. So the car's bonnet was wrenched round from the road it ought to have gone on, and Kitty rushed, her screen rain-blurred, down the long hill leading to the river.

The ford was really an overflow which dried up completely in summer; in winter it was generally about a foot deep. As Kitty drove down she saw the sheen of the water spreading out widely, and heard the hoarse roar of the flooded river as it tore by the low-lying road.

Kitty crammed in her low, and took the water with a hoarse snarl which drowned the noise of the flood, then she throttled down and crept on. She had often been through the ford and had no difficulties. The water lapped to the steps, swirled higher. Kitty grew frightened. The wheels sank in holding mud, and just ahead she saw that the flood was much deeper, as it washed the edges of the walls bordering the road. It was better to go back.

Kitty was not experienced; she crammed on her brakes, slammed in the reverse, and put out the already overtired car. It stopped, and sank lower, with a sough, into the mud. The road was wide just there; there were several feet of water between Kitty and the top of the fences; to get out and try to start would mean being wet through. Dusk was falling rapidly.

No one might pass during the night. There was nothing for it but to scramble through water to the fence and walk home, drenched and miserable.

With truly feminine logic, Miss Adair blamed Costello for her misfortune.

"Pepper-castering at me with silly little specks of advice, which he knew I wouldn't take, instead of telling me honestly that I should be drowned," stormed Kitty to the loneliness. "I should never have come at all in the rain if he hadn't worried me—and now. Oh, if someone would only come from somewhere."

Waiting irresolutely for help, Kitty sat on; she was getting chilled and very wet. The rain fell in cold sheets, and the river was rising almost visibly.

Kitty called for help shrilly, to be answered by a pessimistic donkey sheltering behind a hedge, and far away by an optimistic cock who hoped it might clear next day.

"The fools! Oh, what shall I do?" said Kitty wrathfully, as she shrieked again, and was again answered by the two.

"Ugh-ee ah-ee-a!" crowed the distant rooster.

"Ee-aw!" remarked the donkey.

Kitty felt something very like a sob rising in her throat. She shrieked again tremulously.

"It's a poor place to practise animal imitations in," said a voice from behind Kitty.

She jumped round to see Mr. Moroney wrapped in a waterproof and riding the fat cart cob.

"And it was very like them both," said Costello, showing no apparent surprise or emotion at finding Kitty in the midst of a sea of muddy water.

"You came after me?" said Kitty, hysterical, from relief.

"I rode down this way," said Costello drily, "to look at the flood. Yes—there are foolish animals down here; no wonder you abuse them. Good-bye."

"And—about getting me out," gasped Kitty, as Costello raised his cap and began to turn his cob round. "You can't leave me **HERE**."

"When you apologize," remarked Moroney, "I'll ride in and fetch you, or put a rope round the car. She'll be buried in three hours' time. When that river rises it does rise."

Miss Adair rapped her icy foot against the car, and

said it probably did ; she pulled some of the hood up and then let it fall with a flop. She was extremely miserable.

" Well ? " said Costello. " Remember I didn't deserve that speech. I was only trying to keep you away from where you are."

Kitty saw a wave of water wash distinctly higher on her step.

" Do you swim ? " Costello asked.

" I apologize," Kitty said grimly, her colour high.

" That's all right. Now I'll help you," said Costello placidly. " I'll lift you off."

But the cart cob came so unwillingly into the flood, and even less willingly near the motor-car, that Costello's original idea of lifting Kitty off became impossible.

Exceedingly red in the face, Mr. Moroney remarked through set teeth that he had forgotten the villain of a pony always hated water since he was nearly drowned as a foal, and fought against the iron-mouthed rushes of the sturdy slave towards dry land and safety.

Finally Moroney produced a rope which he carried under his coat, and circling and sidling into the now orange-coloured flood he directed Kitty to run it round the car.

It was annoying of Miss Adair to watch all these efforts with a remotely inattentive look, and to ask pleasantly if he generally went out for rides armed with coils of rope, when it was produced.

To which Moroney replied : " I do not, and you know it "; and the conversation languished for a time.

" He will never pull out this car, and I might just as

well have walked out when it was inches shallower," growled Kitty hopelessly. "You haven't done any good; ride for help—for someone in a trap."

"He'll pull tons," said Costello, getting down on to the rivulet-grained road. "Now then—Hup! Hup!"

The cart pony hopped, setting every stout limb and muscle he possessed to the task, but it was beyond him. The car and Miss Adair remained set as melancholy jewels in a turbid setting.

Moroney, pulling also, punctuated his efforts with biting remarks as to obstinacy and girlhood, and occasional yells of help, until at last he raised his head quickly. "Shout!" he commanded. "You shout."

Kitty shrieked shrilly.

"The fellow that answered your voice," said Costello eagerly. "Listen! I want to locate him."

A hoarse "Ee-aw" broke across the dripping evening, and next moment Kitty was alone save for the cart pony, which ate grass stolidly.

There were tears in Kitty's eyes; she was cold and wet and miserable, and now very lonely.

But presently Mr. Moroney reappeared, dragging an unwilling and dripping ass by the ear.

"Here's your friend that was chatting to you," he said cheerily.

No one but an Irishman could have wound a rope round a donkey and a cart cob so that both could pull: Costello padded it with his coats on their shoulders, and urged both animals to efforts with yells and thumps.

"Gan! out of that! Gan, I tell ye—pull up, Cobby! Hup! Gan, you schemers!"

The car moved, came slowly backwards foot by foot, Kitty steering exceedingly wildly, until at last its

front wheels cleared the last yellow inch of the flood and Kitty was on dry land.

"The donkey did it," said Miss Adair, getting out.

Costello eyed her thoughtfully as he loosed his panting team. He was splashed, wet, muddy, and so far Kitty had not proffered one word of gratitude for her rescue.

It took quite ten minutes to turn the car, for, chilled and with bad indigestion from mixed oils, she spluttered out each time the reverse was put in. But she faced the ascent at last, throbbing protest against her ill-usage.

"You haven't said 'Thank you' yet," said Costello slowly.

"It was most fortunate," replied Kitty very icily, "that your ride should have brought you this way, and I am greatly obliged for the assistance. Of course, as you were there, I could not take off my shoes and stockings, which I meant to, and get her going myself. And I apologized, but I'm not one bit sorry for what I said," flashed out Kitty, opening her throttle until the engines roared, and flying off up the slope.

"There's girls for you," said Costello, getting into his coat and looking at his sopping boots.

"Where on *earth* have you been?" Madge asked her sister.

"In the river with Mr. Moroney," said Kitty, going up to change.

Madge thought that Kitty must be kept more strictly.

When Kitty met Moroney next day, she again thanked him stiffly, and sent her sister to express further gratitude for the rescue.

"It appears to be most fortunate that you rode

out to look at some cattle," said Madge, "for though Kitty says she could have waded quite easily if you had not been there—— Oh, how your horse kicked——!"

"I must have given him a touch of the spurs," said Costello, after a pause. "Yes, it was lucky I went out to look for a goose——"

"For a goose!" said Madge, who had her back turned to her sister and did not see Kitty's scarlet cheeks. "But geese swim——"

"Or was it a cow?" said Costello. "No, I'm sure it was something more foolish than that. I'm very glad I was able to help a young lady in the end, Mrs. Deane."

"He seems quite hurt about something. I do hope you were civil to him," said Madge to her sister.

Kitty rode on with hot cheeks. When the flush faded she grew curiously pale. She had done with Costello Moroney. He was not a nice person, and he could marry self-satisfied Elaine, who would teach him sense and patch up his tumbledown house.

The country was under water; blue pools, crisped to steel at the edges, lay on the sodden fields; the horses' feet sank with a squelch into the earth, leaving red scars where they had pressed; the banks were slippery slides of mud, almost impossible to jump if two or three horses had been in front of you.

Mud and water was flung up in showers, splashing coats and hats. A fox broke from Bulteel to come back draggled and tired, after a mile, but a second one, getting away well in front of hounds, carried on towards Ballingrange Gorse.

There were horses down at every fence; it took something very clever and steady to keep its feet.

Kitty's brown slipped and slid ominously, yet got along without a fall; but the new horse with the spavins, unacclimatized to big banks, got Oliver Deane down three times.

Then scent suddenly improved; they ran fast for the last two miles before they got to the low-lying gorse which has seen the beginning of so many good hunts. Kitty got away when they began to gallop; the brown fenced perfectly towards the end, and yet, for the first time, Kitty knew that one may do the thing one loves best on earth and not enjoy it.

She banged against Mr. Moroney in a gate; he made way for her at a gap, and his eyes told her plainly that he did not know why she had grown suddenly uncivil.

Lancelot Gore, who was generally avoided, found himself so genially received, that he haunted Kitty all day. He told her how to manage her horse on a very slippery day, the exact and correct method of steadying the animal so that it should not lose its feet as it took off, and he was really not sure that, with so many other hunts to be ridden, it was not safer to stay upon the roads when the country was so submerged.

"Besides being more charitable to the poor farmers," said Lancelot. "Papa says we do dreadful damage on these wet days. There is Costello now," went on young Gore, "riding his good four-year-old quite recklessly, as if the value did not matter, and yet his whole place is tumbling down."

"But he could mend it if he liked," suggested Kitty, biting into a sandwich, which tasted to her of ashes or nothing at all.

"So papa says," observed Lancelot, looking aside

as though it were not a nice subject to pursue. "Some day—we hope—it will all be different."

Old Andy, on the grey, came up to Kitty.

"If we were wise we'd ride on home, missie," he said, "for there's a great shower working up, and around Glencar you'll scarcely see the grass."

"It was but spotting above the pools this mornin'," observed one of Andy's many friends. "It would be like a foretaste of the v'yage to yerself, Andy, to ride over it."

"There is no fox will face it save maybe away to the westward to Garryduff," broke in a second friend, "an' there it is not too bad, but that is an ugly line across the railway line."

"An' the river," said Andy mildly. "You are forgettin' the river, Con, that the fox must swim."

"He would have but one swim, and be done with it that way," said Con, "an' not to be trailin' in an' out till he wouldn't know whether 'twas fish or fox he was, the craythur! Costello's meadows is islands in a lake to-day."

The sky was darkening; a pall of steely dun grey was travelling from the west, its dual line meeting and merging with the watery grey of light clouds which held no rain.

A cold little wind sobbed through the leafless hedges, and wrinkled the rain ~~pool~~ in the hollows.

Kitty was ready to go ~~home~~. It was a long ride of nine miles, and early as it was she was tired.

"What I should advise," said ~~Lancet~~, "is your getting on to our outside car when mamma is on, and allowing us to drive you home later when a trap could be sent for you. It is ~~not~~ like Andy to be afraid of rain when there may be a hunt."

Andy replied mildly that he could do with rain overhead, but not underfoot, and he again pointed to the leaden sky. "On an outside car too, you can't keep dry for two minutes," he said.

"We are taking Mr. Moroney back to stay the night," said Lancelot. "Do come, Miss Adair. You and I could try some songs."

Kitty turned the brown's head sharply; she trotted towards the road with a curt "No; thank you so much" flung over her shoulder.

After this Mr. Lancelot Gore confided to his father that he feared Miss Adair would require a great deal of management as a wife.

"Ye're right. Jog on, missie," advised Andy, "the dead jog. We'll be better off at home."

The old grey knew the hounds' patter; falling into it instinctively they jogged along the lonely roads with the cold moan of the rain growing louder and the sky darkening rapidly.

It was January, with January's chill in the air.

"You've never been out of Ireland— Won't you be lonely, Andy?" Kitty asked, for the old man was to sail in March.

"I always meant to go to my Kate's grave, missie." His eyes were dim now and without their twinkle. "Every penny I've laid by for twenty years was for it, and now I'm goin'. I wouldn't go until they could see there was no call to be ashamed of me—until I could do it decent. But—it will be strange," said Andy wistfully. "They tells me the big ships are like houses, an' that the sea is wonderful; an' then all I will see goin' an' comin', an'," his face lighted up, "the big headstone I will be gettin' up to Katey, with the angels an' all. Maybe they think the one there

shabby, but I waited till I could go meself—to put a good one.”

“It won’t be Ballinmena without you,” Kitty grumbled. “And we’ll go soon after you go, Andy, back to England.”

“*You* should stay here, missie,” said Andy softly.

Sodden fields, mist-shrouded hills, a lonely, lovable land, stretching all round. There is no room for further love when every inch is guarded and looked after, but here the wistful country cried for it, crept as a stray dog to the touch of a kindly hand, whispering that it was a thing alone and uncared for.

“*You* should stay here, missie.” Kitty shook her small head. No, she was going back to Deane’s Hollow, where the new furniture would certainly not be purchased with the money made on selling horses, and she would live decorously there, attending stiff garden-parties, of which the only enjoyable moment was getting into the motor to go home; and dinners; and ride out about the park, and go to occasional big race meetings, and wear her best frocks.

“I don’t suppose we shall ever come back to Ireland,” said Kitty dully. “Mrs. Deane thought one could make money of everything here, and do all the hunting for nothing, and now she’s beginning to find out—well, ‘hat one can’t——”

Andy said absently that he was indeed afraid the new bay had a very bad use of his hocks, and would not help to fill a purse with his price.

The first drops of rain were falling as they jogged up the lane leading into Ballinmena. Coming in a sheet of water which would soak through anything, the grey lines whipped across the outlines of the big hay barns, of the stables and snug little house with

the conical hill rising behind it. It swept across the brown bog, blurring out Mat O'Neill's house, binding the world with its wet grey ropes.

"It will be very strange," said Andy, "and I will be cruel lonesome when I goes. An' they'll play the devil with it all," he added, in sudden brisk wrath. "Danny, an' Honora, an' the lot of them."

Through the grey swirl he peered at barns and house and bog. His was the master mind which had made the place what it was, improved and built and altered and stocked, until Ballinmena was prosperous. But would they work in the meadow without him? Would they rush the hay-making through in the fine days? Would they see the young stock and the fattening cattle as he had done?

The love of home and his work was deeply implanted in old Andy's heart. It waged war with his life's desire to see his wife's resting-place and put up that extravagant marble memorial to her memory.

"I can't be trustin' one of them," said Andy. "My, missie, but we're cruel wet. And even if I can't, sure I must," he added more cheerily, "as our deaths of cold won't help it one way or the other."

CHAPTER XIII

ANNE CAFFERTY reft the letters from old Barty's son to rush in to tell the news. "There is a suspect of a cow next door to Sweeney's, at Donillan's. Barty seen her, an' they drivin' her, gone from us yet, God save us! Arrah! God save us from harrum."

This was bad news for Kitty before she drove to the meet, Sadie running sweetly as a dream. Now that she was treated with more deference and new understanding she was proving her worth.

The hunting people were full of it; ill news travels fast. They had been warned of a possible stoppage if the epidemic spread. They could not draw Cappagh Gorse because a common line from there was across Sweeney's farm.

Derrick Knox Harding was unpunctual, he stood talking, wondering what they ought to do, his cheery face puckered with unusual lines.

"May as well get the best fox we can to-day, anyhow," he said at last, as they jogged towards the hill they were to draw.

Cappagh was an almost certain find. Knock Dreina, too lately cut down, was most doubtful. The melancholy wail of the "Come away!" rang knell-like across the day, and then Derrick, who knew foxes were about, tried patches of gorse and clumps of rocks, with a biting, icy wind roaring bleakly up the hills.

Everywhere shelter was to be found people got to it, crouching against walls and behind hedges, as hounds drew the cairns and bushes busily, for a fox had been there quite lately.

And in every cranny Kitty seemed fated to find Moroney's horse next to hers. Her attempts to be politely cold were somewhat childishly marked, but Mr. Moroney ignored them so persistently that Kitty found herself talking to him almost amiably.

They could see his old house from the top of the hill, crouched among the sheltering trees, with the river a flash of steel in the chill, clear light.

"A big piece of the wall came down in the last storm," Costello told Kitty, "and now the cows will get out."

"Build it up," said Miss Adair sharply.

"If—I had the money," said Costello dreamily, "but it would cost forty pounds."

Kitty sniffed, and rode on into the bite of the cold. She had no patience with Costello. They found at last, pulling up an out-lier from a bramble-grown crag, and scrambling and sliding down the hill. Scent was poor and catchy; hounds would race for a few minutes, and then seem utterly at fault.

With a skill which Derrick Harding had mastered since his arrival as an impostor at Cahervally, he helped where help was needed, held them on past until it was evident they were running to Doonedurra.

"He is twinty minutes ahead of ye," piped a scornful youth, "goin' up to the Great House. Let ye hurry on if ye want to have him cot. Will I whoop the dogs to where I saw him go?"

"You will not," said Derrick equably. "There, was it? Thank you. Holes shut, Costello?"

"Unless you buried the place itself you'd probably leave one open," replied Moroney. "He's had time to search for one without a stone by now, and is sure to be in."

Men seemed to pour from nowhere as the hounds ran in through the new gap in the wall. Grooms rushing hurriedly, a stout youth bestriding the fat cob which had rescued Kitty, two others on a donkey, an elderly man driving a cart with which he had been putting out top dressing. The cook tore down the avenue with a cake-tin in her hands.

The shabbiness of the old place touched and hurt Kitty; it was so nakedly tumbledown, so aggressively ruinous, with its crumbling walls, its rotting palings.

They marked the fox in the screen of trees just before the house, and Miss Moroney came out.

When Costello jumped off to run in for drinks and cake, Kitty noticed how old his hunting coat was, the black green in places, and that his boots were patched.

"Hope he expected us this time," Kitty heard Lancelot Gore's drawling voice. "Last time there was no soda-water, and only half a bottle of whisky. He takes none himself. And with such a fine place, it's absurd——"

Why did Costello pretend to be so poor and neglect everything? fumed Kitty to herself, watching Elaine helping to hand round cakes and do hostess.

Kitty was full of the intolerance of youth. Moroney had money and yet always talked of being so poor.

She wondered what the other brother had been like.

"The other Mr. Moroney died some time ago, didn't he?" she asked Andy, her colour high and her voice strained by its intense carelessness.

"Out in America, missie. He was a queer piece of goods, I'm thinkin'. Not like this one. All for the spendin' and very reckless every way. Mr. Costello was good to him."

Hounds moved off to the next draw, a long jog in the bitter cold, with steel-grey shadows commencing to quiver across the bright sun.

It was the cold of spring which numbs and penetrates, as the north-east wind seems to war with the coming life of the earth, to fight for the memory of dead winter. Cattle huddled by the hedges; even the sheep looked cold.

They found again, to hunt even more slowly than before, scent failing completely, and the only enlivening part of it being Mr. Lancelot Gore's remarks as to how much more successfully he could have hunted the fox.

"When he was plainly making for Droveen why not bustle towards Droveen," said Lancelot, "and give hounds some chance?"

"Wouldn't you like to see the pack after two months of him?" said Andy to a friend, "with his horn going at every big fence, I tell you."

Kitty was dispirited, out of humour. She rode back with old Andy, declining a seat in the dicky of her sister's car.

"Oh, I shall hate to leave Ireland," said Kitty drearily, "and I must go soon. Madge is getting tired of it."

They passed Timsy Henessy riding homewards. He was just a little drunk, and he looked subdued

and curiously frightened, as if some misfortune had fallen on him. He eyed Andy with civil sullenness, muttering a curt good night.

"There's something amiss with Timsy," said Andy, "something on his mind. I wonder——?" Andy looked back very curiously.

Creina was watching for them, her pretty face blue with cold, asking for news of the fresh outbreak.

"Patsy was over to Dromin to-day for the harness you lent Timsy," she whispered, "an' he saw them hurryin' a cow on to a stable an' lockin' the door, God save us! Could it be thue?"

"If he tries to hide an outbreak, Timsy will get into trouble," said Andy. "Maybe that was what was on him."

Honora Madden milked her cows next day to the tune of many "Vo-Vo's." "Wasn't it bad enough to have the cows sick with people, but the law on top of that an' the polis guns smhokin' with the dinth of slaughter?" argued Honora.

Mrs. Mat Sweeney it appeared, would not be the better of it all for twinty year; she was seventy now.

"For an ould woman to hear guns clappin' at her own door-step, an' polis thrampin', an' all the poor cows dead an' gone, an' the family lookin' for a pint of milk, an' them smhell sthuffs that they keeps in hospitals rubbed on everyone's boots and nose. Danny said that it would frighten you surely. Not a cow is to lave the railway stations, an' not a sowl was to go a-near Sweeney's, an' they are diggin' holes an' berryin' the poor cows all the day an' night."

"An' it nonsense, Honora," added Danny.

"Childer's nonsense. We had it here an' I a gosson, an' where were yer polis an' Boards an' all thim that only reads an' niver knows or sees for thim-selves? We housed the poor sick craythurs, an' we fed them with balls of food put down with cabbage-stalks, an' we thrun a bit of lime around, an' the sorra a one did we lose of tin than tuk sick. But now there's nothin' left to yerself and commin sense, an' so all goes."

"Spencil the spotty cow, Danny," commanded Honora, moving on. "They're sayin' the infection comes over in straw from one of thim dirty foreign counthries, with eggs no less. They must go to the Roosians an' the Turks for their eggs in the cities now I'm told, because they get them chaper. I met a gerril that was in service in London an' she told me half of thim'd go in smhoke with a pop off the pan, an' just what ye'd expect, says she, from a counthry that grows nothin' but thim bombs they throws at kings. Roosians an' Turks!" snorted Honora.

"Danny, I am up the hills, an' I afther milkin'. I wants the jennet."

Danny asked "What for?" politely.

"To see Herself," whispered Honora through the rhythmic swish-swish of the falling milk, "an' go round the farum with what'll sthop the cows takin' ill."

"Arrah, God save ye—ye an' herself," snapped Danny, but uncertainly.

It was the twentieth century, and yet on the hills by Athgarvan lived a wise woman who gathered "herrubs" in the moonlight, and made strange concoctions from them, which were reputed to have power to cure coughs and fevers and the wasting

sickness. Others which helped to speedy marriage, or would ward off misfortune.

Simple things if the people had but known, recipes handed down from Herself's mother, mixtures of ordinary weeds and herbs: blackberry tea and honey for coughs; brews for fevers: a little sugar and water and any flower petals for love-sick damsels; but other things gathered at night and brewed secretly to keep trouble away.

"God save ye—ye an' herself," said Danny, "an' two pint of milk gone on to the ground an' ye dhramin' nonsense. If Father Con——"

"That read her out from the alther, an' came around whin she gave him a syrup that took the impression weight off his chest an' let him out huntin'," said Honora triumphantly. "She is only a harrumless old woman, he says now, gotherin' herrubs."

Danny grunted softly.

Ballinmena hummed with excitement; fear of the dread disease was on everyone's lips. Patsy wondered if a hole could not be made in the centre of the hay, where sick beasts could be concealed from prying eyes.

"An' they to bawl an' moo the minnit one of thim damn inspecthors'd pass," growled Danny. "An' a fine to pay that'd fill a hat. If they'd lave them to me I'd cure every one of them, so I would, as me dada did before me."

Creina sat wide-eyed, staring, leaving her bread and fried bacon untasted.

Mrs. Cafferty went away to the city to get something special which her aunt had. "She got it in Rome," whispered Mrs. Cafferty, "an' when there were two houses lightin' up to heaven but half a block

away, she up an' sprinkled a few dhrops on the windy sill an' would ye believe it the wind never turned to bring the fire down her way? I'll have a pair of cowl'd ducks for the quality, Creina, an' a couple of jam tarts, an' the cutlets ready for yerself to fry."

"If ye'd sphare me a few dhrops of that bottle, Anne," whispered Creina imploringly, "to sprinkle around."

Mrs. Cafferty counselled Creina not to be frettin'. "Wasn't it well that Ned Casey had gone in for the wheat an' the oats now and using out of his sthore of sthock? So don't be frettin', child," said Anne kindly, "yer father is safe."

"A few dhrops," whimpered Creina, "to shake around be—the covert."

Here Mrs. Cafferty said "Oh!" with gentle comprehension, and patted Creina's hands.

"An' with yourself promised an' all," she reproved, "to be thinkin' only of Mat—shame on ye, Creina, child!"

Completely filling the centre of a small cart, Honora Madden left for the hills; she drove a jennet of uncertain temper, which was given to jibbing when he felt inclined, and concealed under some bags at her feet were two of Andy's best chickens, three dozen eggs, and two pounds of butter. She had taken these when Anne went out.

"Bein' on his bizness, Mither Andy would not begrudge them," said Honora placidly.

When the jennet wheeled and backed he was set upon his way by so vigorous a whipping that he crawled to Athgarvan with resignation. Here, in a tiny cabin built against a high wall, lived Herself, once christened Nancy Naylan.

A reef of aromatic smoke drifted through the door—there was no chimney—and in the blue mist an old woman stirred a pot which seethed and bubbled.

A very old woman, hard-mouthed, her face crossed and re-crossed by hundreds of wrinkles, her bright eyes shining under thick grey eyebrows. Old Nancy had never troubled to rear the chickens which strayed at her door, or to keep hens to lay the bowlful of eggs on her dressers; her knowledge kept her free from want.

In the reef of the smoke Honora whispered out her trouble, laid forth her offerings. Followed an hour wrought with almost unholy bliss, when old Nancy smoked her clay pipe and talked in low tones of fairies and charms and things which were growing forgotten, as she gave Honora tea.

Ah, if Honora could but step to the forth above on the Fairies' Hill on Midsummer Eve and wait there concealed until a man rode forth on a white horse, an cot the gowlden bridle, the rider would be obliged to grant any request made to him. But if she missed her hold until the promise was made, then Honora would be the little people's for ever. That was the one chance against it—

"An' Midsummer Eve's away in June," said Honora; "if 'twas to-morry now, fat as I am, the cows has me med quick on me feet, I might thry to catch the horse."

There were many things which might have been done, it appeared, years before. Everyone knew how by Dreina's fall there came, on All Souls' Eve, a woman in grey who sat by the falls swathed in mist, as though the water clothed her. And by her side was a strange fish whose head she held against her wet transparent

cloak : but three times must she lay him down, and if there was one near quick enough to seize him, the water-woman could be made to grant any wish to get it back, for without it she must stay on land.

"There was Shawn Dayly," mumbled Nancy, "in me mother's day, an' he wishful to marry a gerril of the O'Briens that was far above him, an' he thried that. A cowld night it was, with a frost fallin' afther great rains, an' he was towlt if he failed to howld the fish he would be taken, but he was brave an' risked it. An' faix they never saw him again, but they found his hat away far down come to shore, an' two whisky bottles where he had been waitin', an' that was all. There was some said he med off to avoid all he owed, an' that the gerril followed him, for she disappeared a month later, but me mother she knew—she knew. Shawn is below in the wide wathers far down near the say, workin' there hard——"

Through the pungent reek drifted whispers of things which crisped Honora's spine, of strange things which had happened ; of children charmed away, and other blighted ; of the big-headed, witless changelings which little elfin mothers brought to cradles, stealing away with the fair human children.

"And to get them back how one must bate the child and bate it until the elfin mother came flying to its rescue and laid your own child again in the cradle." But the soft fool-women who gave the poor distorted thing affection must keep it for ever. Elfin, witless, yet cunning—unhappy always.

"And then for the charm against the infection." Honora's offering, backed by two plump half-crowns, produced a bottle of strong-scented liquid, and some curious dried objects which, used according to direc-

tions, would keep the evil from Ballinmena. The liquid must be sprinkled by moonlight on the boundaries of the farm; the dried objects hung on the cow-houses.

Honora said several prayers as she went homeward, as there might be sin in charms, but she drove the soured jennet straight to the long cow-houses and demanded hammer and nails immediately.

"An' if one of ye daurs to sthir thim charrums, Danny Hehir," she exclaimed, "I'll know the reason why; there's no infection can pass undther them same, now. Herself is sure of it."

It was unkind of Danny to remark that the mysterious objects were only the dried feet of chickens, and equally unkind of the jennet to start off when Honora was nailing up the second, so that that stout lady was laid on her back on a heap of dirty straw.

Uprising wrathful but unhurt, she denounced Patsy fiercely. To beckon at the baste with oats, an' he sthandin' like the dead; to wave the measure oberight his two eyes. "I seen ye, Patsy Keefe. Out of me sight!"

When Patsy, filled with penitence for his innocent mistake, came to render first aid, he was further wrathfully informed that to be tellin' lies mended no bones. Also that Honora knew who would go short of the drop of sweet milk for dinner, and whose weekly butter would have the quare taste.

"To go to kill me," snorted Honora tearfully, "an' the gran' little charrum losht an' gone in the dung-heap."

By the time Patsy had found the withered claw, and himself nailed it under the slates, all animosity was forgotten. He put up the jennet for Honora,

and helped her shaken bulk to the kitchen as though hard words had never been.

Mrs. Cafferty had returned from what she termed the city, a covert contempt for Honora dancing in her bright old eyes whenever she looked at the stout milkwoman.

"Herseli an' charrums," confided Anne Cafferty to the kettle, "an' wicked nonsense," she observed to the hot soda loaf, flinging a trusting glance towards a small bottle carefully pushed far in on the dresser.

"The worst of it all is they say it will stop the huntin'," said Andy, coming in, "with February just on top of us, the best month of the year."

"Stop hunting?" almost shrieked Kitty, who was close behind Andy. "How can hunting be stopped? Will the hounds catch it?"

"I heard they stopped it above where 'twas bad," said Andy. "They say the horse feet is able to carry the infection. There is no order yet out, except not to ride over Sweeney's farm."

Kitty leant against the dresser gloomily. To lose a month's hunting would be a slice thrown away of Time's best cake. Just as she was beginning to understand and enjoy it! Just as her hands were growing deft to the bridle, and her limbs learning to grip and balance properly over fences and going fast! Just as hounds were no longer dogs, and foxes no longer mysterious red beasts always ready to be hunted.

Kitty leant and groaned.

"For the love of Hivin, miss," cried Anne, "do not lane against the blessed bottle. Yer arrum nearly touched it then."

"There is no bless-ed bottle—nothing but this," said Kitty coldly, raising the small white flask which

had once held hair oil ; " and I am upset, Mrs. Cafferty. I am upset."

" So long as the blessed bottle is not ! " said Mrs. Cafferty, rescuing it with a snap. " Isn't yer life long, miss, to ride hunts in ? "

Honora Madden spent her evening adjuring the dull sky to show the moon and be done with it ; she stayed at Ballinmena until eleven, hoping the leaden clouds might break.

" Sharp enough she is to show her lantern when the young folk don't want her," snapped Honora testily. " There's never a night ye'd go for a sthroll with one yer mother'd object to but she'd be floatin' like a scoured fryin'-pan above in the bl: makin' it all like day, an' now she'd hid."

The rain fell suddenly, swishing in leaden drops, when Honora went home. Mrs. Cafferty thanked her gods that what she would do would be done in God's sunshine on the morrow. It was best in the sunlight.

" An' look at what ye counted on," remarked Honora, coming damply across the yard in the same unbroken downpour next day. " God's sunshine me ant Anne ! The two of them is off gallivantin' to Australiee to sphite us. Moon an' sun."

There was a lull in the reign of fear. No fresh cases occurred, no more cows were slaughtered and buried

Mat Sweeney dutifully bathed his boots and himself in evil-smelling disinfectants when he went abroad, and, with Ireland's joyous carelessness, everyone began to hope the epidemic would go no further.

Easter would fall in April ; the long days of Lent were with them, and Creina had refused to marry. But she knew her respite would not last. Mrs.

Henessy drove down frequently to press Timsy's suit. She hinted at mysterious maidens living in other countries, whose parents she had written to. She solemnly warned Mrs. Casey that Timsy was not to live on single.

"For I hear he was about all day at the races with that foxy-headed girl of the Mahoneys'," snorted Mrs. Henessy. "The kind that'd sweep him off to Dublin to be married as soon as look at you, an' she without two pennies to rattle on her tombstone. Timsy drove home in their outside car, having no money, he said, for the railway fare."

Creina, listening unhappily, thought of her two pounds.

Mrs. Henessy was holding a white screen before the blackness of their life at Dromin, and she feared the moment when some passing blast might lift its corners. The loss of the calves had been no light one to people already in straits. Timsy had taken to drink; a trusting shop in the town gave him credit, and Mrs. Henessy and Grace alone knew how many black bottles were cleared empty out of the dusty rooms.

If Creina's money could not be secured to prop the place up Mrs. Henessy saw ruin gaping for them. With that once secured she meant to depose Timsy, to farm and toil herself, and not let him waste and spend the gold. But she must have it, and she urged, and Creina held back.

"Nice credit to the nuns above to say that the girl would not do yer biddin', Mrs. Casey, and be married before Lent," taunted Mrs. Henessy. "That wasn't me bringing up."

Mrs. Casey said sullenly that Creina had the engage-

ment made with Andy, and that the girl had not been too well.

"It wouldn't do to be vexin' Andy when he might give her something worth while later. 'Tisn't ivery one'd lay his hand to a young cow for a weddin' present," went on Creina's mother. "An' he's owld. He may have a will med, that ye might be glad of some day, ma'am."

After one of these interviews Creina gathered courage. Her mind had grown since she had left home. She prayed and implored, she even hinted at rebellion.

Wouldn't they give Matty a chance, just a chance, to see if the cows paid? Didn't some say that Timsy wouldn't be the gran' match at all, he havin' wasted all his dada had med, an' he drunken too?

Creina's resolutions swayed and fell before her mother's wrath, but meeting Timsy in the lane they rose again, as earth children refreshed by the fall.

Timsy was not beautiful to see; he was unshaven, his green suit was dirty and his brilliant tie spotted, his breath reeked of whisky. Timsy reeled across Creina's path. His mother had warned him that he must make his wooing sure. Backing into the dripping hedge, Creina knew that she could not, that her heart and spirit would break for ever if she had to go as this man's wife to the big slate house.

Timsy was inclined to be aggressive. Diving unsteadily in pursuit of Creina, he wished to know whin he was to pay Father Con his dues, and whether his mother had fixed the date now.

Here his loving rush carried him into the spot in the hedge which Creina had dexterously slipped out of.

"That was a damn nasty thrick," roared Timsy, plucking thorns from his cheek.

Creina, panting, showed symptoms of repeating it.

"There's them that would not throw me into thorns," growled Timsy. "I—I tell ye, I might pay ye for that yet, Creina Casey, me lady."

Then Creina made the mistake of appealing to a virtue which Timsy did not possess—his generosity. She begged him to let her go, held out pleading hands, looked at him with tear-wet eyes, whispered that she would never even like him, but would break her heart in his house, since she cared for someone else.

Unwittingly her worst plea, for she had touched a vain fool on the raw of his vanity.

Timsy lighted a pestiferous cigarette as he informed the girl that he knew girls' nonsense. Wouldn't she be lookin' for the trace of his step an' they married a week? "Meself! an' that poor little felly Mat," snorted Timsy, "that never had a decent coat to his back, an' ates mate on Sundays when he's lucky."

Listening with the tears drying, with her outstretched hands falling numb, Creina heard what a lucky creature she was; how other girls would stand in envy at the chapel door as they two walked out man and wife. How all foolish maidens loved the husbands given to them by their parents.

"So we'll be done with yer nonsense," said Timsy coarsely but gaily; "well for ye I don't tell his reverence on ye."

A wiser man would have augured ill from the girl's frozen dumbness; from the quick alertness with which she avoided him, and her passion lack of resistance when he caught and kissed her.

"It is all settled now," observed Timsy, wiping his scratched face. "Amn't I as good as any Mat?"

"I tell ye I never, never will," said Creina. "Never, Timsy Henessy, while the breath's in me body," and scrambling over the bank she fled away.

An ugly look came over Timsy's face. He strolled sullenly back towards Ballinmena. He must get hold of Creina, and if she would not come for fair means—his befuddled brain worked with a new cunning, as he thought of plans which might serve him. Creina was nothing, a mere piece of flesh and blood of the opposite sex; Creina's money was all he thought of.

He knew how deeply certain principles are planted in the convent-trained girls' minds. Timsy smoked his evil cigarette and went to call at Ballinmena. Here, received by Madge—she was out in the little garden and could not avoid him—he grew puffed-up again. He, Mr. Timsy Henessy, of Dromin, sitting in a lady's drawing-room on terms of equality with her, to be flouted by a little hatless farmer's daughter who scrubbed pots and pans for Anne Cafferty!

"Will you get some tea, Anne," said Mrs. Deane patiently, when she came in, "and open the window? The Captain must have spilt some whisky at lunch-time: it is quite strong."

"His whisky isn't that smellsome," said Anne darkly, as she flung the window wide. "Andy is inside, Misther Henessy, if ye're wishful to see him."

Creina had fled across the fields, shaken, frightened. What should she do if there was no rescue? She could not marry Timsy Henessy. Running fast, she almost fell over Mat coming out of the covert.

The clouds were lifting, showing a pale evening sun. Mat's little cottage stood out against the glow, a small thatched place, crouching before the wide bog, but all poor Creina wanted on earth.

She clung to Mat, sobbing out her misery. "If the cows but did well," wept Creina.

The glow of the sun seemed reflected on Mat's face. There was hope for Creina in every word.

The stock were doin' splendid. Now that the scare of the foot an' mouth was over prices were rising. Given ordinary luck he would clear a large sum when he sold

"There's airy grass," comforted Mat, "an' yer father is not so hard, Creina. I'll be over to him to show him the bit I'll have in hand an' all paid up an' square."

The bog had lighted to a sun-bathed fairyland for Creina. The glow caught reflections in the deep, shimmering pools; picked out tints of red and ochre in the cut turf; the grass seemed to turn emerald in promise of growth.

Fear of Timsy was pushed aside. Creina wandered among the cattle, praising and God-blessing them lest the praise might hurt. So many to be sold, and a good profit. The indifferent hay had not hurt them; they were fat and well. Mat's home-made draining had brought a sour, rushy field back to sweetness; he would be able to meadow it that year.

With her duties completely forgotten, Creina took tea with Mat's aunt, looking lovingly at the brass candlesticks which soon would be hers to polish; at the old blue dishes on the dresser; at the roomy bright old kitchen.

"An' what is up with fat Honora?" Mat asked.

"The night before last I seen her creepin' around in the moonshine, an' she whisperin' to herself."

Honora had followed instructions and put out her charm. Creina laughed softly.

"She was out with what she got from Herself above at Athgarvan," she said. "Maybe there's good in the herrubs, Mat; ye wouldn't know."

Mat said "Childther's nonsense!" stoutly. He was buoyed up by hope. There would be no more out-breaks. His farm had never looked so well. For he had top-dressed and worked and done much. His grass would be up before other people's. He looked forward to a prosperous year.

"That ould Anne Cafferty," snorted Mat's aunt, "should have more sinse in herself, so she should. Charrums, indeed—but I have a few things done meself," she added in an undertone, "to save Matty."

Anne Cafferty, finding herself short-handed at Ballinmena, ordered Patsy to come in from the stables and help, as Creina was away gallivantin' in the bogs, "maybe with an eye to the quality in our parlour," snorted Anne. "Have done with sayin' ye have no time, Patsy Keefe. Ye have no huntin' now. I never knew ye short of time to ate yer dinner," warned Anne, who could add eggs or sweets, according to her pleasure, to the men's meal.

"Bate three eggs for the puddin', Patsy; it's the amandy one Miss Kitty is set on."

Timsy, in the parlour, made himself wonderfully agreeable. He praised everything he saw; when asked if he took sugar he observed gallantly that the touch of Miss Adair's fingers on the cup was sweetness enough, and then, afraid that he had left Madge out

in this compliment, he added, about four minutes later, "to say nothin' of the look of Mrs. Deane threw into the pot an' she ladlin' the tea." He offered Kitty one of his horses to ride, and Madge another; he repeatedly regretted the absence of the Captain.

When he rose to make impressive adieux and to shake hands thoroughly, Timsy was not sure that—with his powers of pleasing the upper classes—he was not throwing himself away on Creina Casey.

"Oh, I'd say it might be soon, Miss Adair," replied Timsy in answer to a question from Kitty. "Though a bachelor isn't over-anxious to give up his freedom, Miss Adair, but we can't keep the fair sex waitin' too long. Med up by me mamma, Mrs. Deane, for I had other views, but a good son must not disappoint a widowed parent." Timsy shook hands again.

As he paused in the dusk outside to wonder if he would not ask Andy for a drink, Oliver Deane's wrathful voice floated through the open window.

"I've been upstairs for half an hour, Madge, in the cold; but with that creature in here I could not come down."

"One only feels one ought to be civil to him if he's going to marry poor Creina," returned Madge's voice.

"Who hates him," broke in Kitty. "Can't we ask Andy to let us have our tea in his room? This one reeks of bad whisky and cheap cigarettes."

Mr. Henessy walked on with a chastened spirit.

Andy had to write many letters every day. He was beginning to pack up and then unpack, and wonder what he should take and leave behind.

His new cabin-trunks had come home to be admired; he paid unwilling visits to the best tailor in Caher-

vally, but he was determined that Kate's Australian relatives should not be ashamed of him.

"Plain and simple," commanded Andy, "but good as they can be, and as you can cut. No dandy waist and skirty coats for an old man."

He spent a bewildered hour in the town with Kitty, who insisted on giving help, and bought almost everything which an elderly countryman was unlikely to want. Shaving-lamps and silver pots; expensive hair-brushes; a cigarette-case. Andy had never touched anything except a pipe, but he paid for the silver without protest.

"It will look so well when you take it out," said Kitty; "just like these silk handkerchiefs, and the gold pencil."

Andy packed away the purchases patiently, with a subdued twinkle in his eyes. Kitty had announced her intention of helping him to pack, and she counselled a dressing-case as indispensable.

"All full of little pots and boxes," said Kitty, "and writing things and matches and places for soap."

"It will be a quarely inhospitable place," remarked Mrs. Cafferty, "if they will not give a man a writin' pin, an' a light for his pipe, or the way of washin' himself."

Andy thought he might omit the dressing-case, but he was worsted when he asked Anne not to forget to brush and put up his grey tweeds.

"An' that I will not, Mither Andy," said Anne firmly, "seein' they are a disgrace since the day the red cow horned ye, and med a hole in the shouldther. Ye will lave them till ye walks in here again."

Andy was excited over everything in these days. The last letter from the Steamship Company was

something mysteriously delightful. It gave the number of his cabin and the date of sailing. Thin letters from Sydney promised welcome.

They would be glad to see him, glad to show him Kate's grave, but the marble slab on it was very tasty, there was scarcely need of a new one; still, it was as he liked.

"They do not know yet that they need not be ashamed of Kate's old Andy," he said, smiling. "It has taken a long time, missie, before I had the chance of showin' them, but it's all comin' now. I couldn't be stinted goin' out. Danny! if ye don't see to the four acre meadow I'll ate ye an' I home."

"Save us!" remarked Danny mildly.

Through the warp of all Andy's plans would run this sudden woof of warning to his henchmen, crossing his plans for the long journey.

"Sea an' sea an' sea again," he said to Kitty one day, "an' nothin' else all round for so long. I wonder will I be very lonesome for the grass, missie."

Kitty said that Honora certainly would be if she were there. Kitty was depressed during these February days, for she kept to her resolution of ending all friendship with Mr. Costello Moroney, and she missed his companionship.

"To make me apologize," stormed Kitty to herself, "to dare to! And to pretend to be poor when he need not be. Oh, let him marry that Elaine," snapped Kitty to herself, "as she doesn't mind."

Costello appeared to take it philosophically. He merely said nothing, which is always the most trying conversation to endure. To get wet through helping a lady, and to be rewarded by an averted face, seemed to him unjust. He was not aware of the hidden

offence which lurked behind the apology, or of Miss Elaine's confidences concerning his wasted money.

Andy had not much more time. He gave unneeded warnings to Anne Cafferty to see to his paying guests during his absence, for Anne had never enjoyed anything more than the turmoil of cooking which had fallen upon her.

Creina dreaded losing her old friend. She could run to him in her troubles, always sure of sympathy, sit with him in the evenings when she had finished helping Anne, and with old Marty gone off to bed or dozing in his chair, hear again and again of Andy's young days ; of the Kate who had made life light for him ; of his happy hard work and poverty ; and then of the letter which had brought such bitter sorrow.

"A sunshiny mornin'," Andy would say, "an' I waitin' to go out till the post was in, it bein' Monday ; an' then old Barty trottin' up the path there through the daffys, an' his face was anxious on him when he pulled out the black-edged envelope. It was strange they never thought to cable, leaving me here happy for so long and she gone."

Lately the talks had been more of Creina's affairs. Andy swore she should not be forced to marry Timsy, that he would help Creina to persuade her parents, and now with Mat's venture prospering it all seemed easier.

"Before I go I will settle it," promised Andy. "I will indeed, Creina. I can value the stock below and tell them you will be as well with Mat and he gettin' on. I'll say that it's better to plant new trees than to put props to old ones."

Andy spoke for Creina, and with effect ; after his interview Mrs. Henessy was astonished to be received

a little vaguely, without the usual fervent assurances that directly Creina came back from Andy's the wedding day should be fixed.

Nodding her bonneted head, the irate lady drove home to Dromin and called to her son.

"If ye do not settle it, Timsy, there is no other handy," she said bitterly. "An' we want her money to get on, Timsy. What with what she'll have down an' what Andy is likely to leave her, Creina Casey is worth lookin' about. Can't ye coort her?" shrilled Mrs. Henessy. "Carry her up a bit of a brooch or a box of sweets, an' not waste money on them paper smokes an' follyin' horses that's always in the Alsos."

"I will go up to see her," said Timsy languidly adding that it offended him to see his future bride serving as a kitchen-maid, and that it was very orkard to pass out the front winders with Mrs. Deane an' Miss Adair always anxious to stop him.

"A sixpenny one'll do," observed Timsy to the shopman; "pick me a bright picther."

But when Timsy presented his offering, looking languidly for a gush of gratitude, he found that chocolates were not all-powerful.

Creina, in fact, thanked him, but said she had a sore tooth, so gave the open box to Miss Timmins, who feared the confectionery was not very pure. Miss Timmins turned over the brown drops lying in their gay shavings, sniffed, and placed the box on the table.

Timsy had sent in for Creina, and was galled when she refused to leave the cake which she was beating. She stirred it vigorously now, taking no notice of her lover, who perched his elegantly clad person on the kitchen table, and tried to look as if he scarcely understood his surroundings.

Clop—clop—clop, went Creina.

"Graciousy me!" remarked Timmins suddenly, "the chocolates are all overturned."

To which Creina returned, "Is that so now?" with complete lack of interest.

Timsy lighted a cigarette; he politely asked Anne Cafferty if the odour would injure cookery, as of course he was quite unaware if it would.

To which Mrs. Cafferty made fiery counter question as to whether it spoilt that of Delia Ahearne.

"Ye have been often enough in her kitchen to know," said Anne, bustling about.

Timsy's complexion deepened several shades and the conversation languished.

"That'll do, Creina, lovely," said Anne. "Into the tin with it. 'Twill be like bakin' feathers. Now melt the butter for the parsley sauce, an' take a bowl to Honora for the crame."

"I was wishful to take Miss Casey for a stroll," explained Timsy presently.

Creina merely placed butter in a bowl to melt.

"When Creina marries me——" said Timsy.

"Whin pigs fly," confided Mrs. Cafferty loudly to the mutton chops which she was trimming up.

Timsy shifted his position on the table to glare—— Mrs. Cafferty's thin little back was irresponsible, so he coughed irritably instead.

Anne remarked that she'd be grateful if he'd take a chair and leave her the table. Creina made parsley sauce with absorbed interest, and Timsy rose to go.

He lurched off with offended dignity, unpleasantly conscious of suppressed giggles in his wake. Patsy's sudden stare, followed by a guffaw from a mouth which he hurriedly covered with his hand, and another

stare of ravished delight, made Timsy stalk away in open bad humour.

He stopped at the gate to make himself agreeable to Kitty, and was surprised to hear her giggle irrepressibly. Retreating with a desire hot upon him to teach Ballinmena manners, Timsy observed Patsy and Pattie peering from behind a cart, joy in their spying eyes.

When Timsy reached home and Grace wished to know who pinned the old kitchen-cloth to his coat tails, he realized what had made merriment for the onlookers.

He went again, driving his car, next day, with even smaller success.

For Creina took courage to tell him that she would not marry him.

"I will not," said Creina. "So don't be wastin' the little brown-ball sweeties on me. I would niver, niver be grand enough for your likes."

Timsy, without a shade of affection in his voice, said that they would see. He asked bitterly to whose humour he owed the adornment of yesterday.

"It was Miss Timmins," giggled Creina. "Patsy told her to do it—or perhaps it wasn't Patsy."

"Creina!" Timsy's weak face took the obstinate look which only weak faces can at times. "I'll see ye marry me."

"Will ye?" said Creina, with a tremor of fear in her voice.

Timsy went home in a very evil humour.

Things were going badly with him. He sat sulkily drinking in his own room, until his mother came in.

She sighed bitterly as she looked at his flushed face and smelt the reek of the fiery spirit.

"I am goin' away for three days, meself an' Grace," she said. "God sind you will not burn the house an' I away."

A sudden light leapt into Timsy's eyes. He thumped his glass down and laughed aloud.

"Goin' away," he said, "are ye? We will have the weddin' shortly," he said, his voice ringing evilly. "I have a thought in me head, mamma, an' we will surely have it."

CHAPTER XIV

A SOFT spring morning with golden sunshine dodging in and out behind fleeting grey clouds ; with a south wind whispering across the bog and the air full of the scent of old Mac's stunted wallflowers. Primroses starred the bank at the end of the garden and their faint scent drifted too with the warm wind.

But there was no joy in Ballinmena. Madge Deane stood on the narrow gravel path and talked of routes to England. Patsy and Pattie wandered disconsolately among the horses which they ought to have been getting ready to go hunting. Honora looked with doubtful confidence at the dried claws swinging above the cow-houses, and old Dan was mute and gloomy.

Hunting had been stopped. There was yet another outbreak at Lastarna, just beyond Sweeney's ; a fresh fusillade and slaughter ; a new digging of graves. The hunt had stopped. The risk of carrying infection was too great. The decision had been made. Hunting was over for the season.

"And nothing else to do," said Madge tragically. "We'll take the horses to England, Noll, at once. We must go to Deane's Hollow and put up with the furniture."

"If they let us take them away," suggested Oliver Deane. "We may not be allowed to. Patsy, is that Henessy mare fit to travel?"

"She is if the thrain went delicate," said Patsy forlornly; "a jerk'd do for her. God help us isn't it the terrible wurd entirely with this foot and mouth disease around us? Ye'd say the Boers were above at Lastarna on yestherday, forty good bastes gone for iver more, the craythurs, bawlin' and booin' to the lasht."

Kitty came out hatless. Patsy was leading her horse forth to exercise. There was an air of unquiet on the yard. Men whispering to each other as they passed, constant anxious glances flung towards the cows, as though the watching eyes felt they must see some beast go sick.

"It will not come here," observed Honora, looking firmly at the chickens' claws. "Thanks to Herself —"

The end of the remark was rudely interrupted by Anne Cafferty remarking loudly that some people ought to have been born hathen Chinies; and what about the blessed wather that was really safeguardin' them?

"We had better go to England next week, Oliver," said Madge. "We'll get the house aired at once. I'll wire to-day to the caretaker."

"You aren't thinking of next year here are you?" Kitty asked slowly and very wistfully.

Madge replied sharply that Irish hunting was over-rated, that everyone had horses to sell, and that she meant to stay in England for the future.

"And hunt through all those great woods round Oliver's place," said Kitty tragically. "It's not hunting."

Captain Deane hoped they might afford something better than the woodlands. He looked regretfully

at the bog, at the conical hill behind them, and at the stretch of flat green land between them and the town. He had never known hunting such as Ireland had shown him.

"If one came purely for pleasure," he said cautiously, "just brought trained screws and did not think about money." Madge's colour rose. "They er—they are afraid of a really good judge's picking up things here," went on Oliver hurriedly, "so made a combine against them."

"Oh! if we did that," replied Madge, with a pleased smile. "If you really like it—— We might come over some winter, just for the fun of it."

"The Captain might get back again," murmured Andy, as he passed. "He isn't as easily taken in as you'd think, when he knows what he wants."

Andy was leaving in a week. He had mapped out almost every mile of his journey. He knew that he was to take supper on the boat if he was a good sailor and tea on the train if he was not, and he had not the faintest chance of finding out before he got on board. Captain Deane had recommended an hotel in London, respectable and solid. Kitty had ordered that his one evening there was not to be idle; that he was to go to the Palace or the Hippodrome and see sights.

To Andy all the long journey was means to the end, a strange and rather terrifying path to Kate's grave and his wife's people. They should not be ashamed of him. Since grief must fail with time he thought of more now how he could spend money on them and of the great ornate monument which he had planned out, than of his sorrow. Maybe bereaved strangers there in years to come would wonder to whose memory

this marble was erected and deem the lost one well loved.

He eyed the varied assortment of things which Kitty had provided him with very dubiously, but it would not do to offend a young lady.

"When would I be lighting that," murmured Andy to the elaborate shaving-lamp, "when there's a barber to be found on the ship?"

"Dreadful ways. Sorrowful ways!" called Father Con from his bicycle. Another mourner for the hunt had come to Ballinmena. "And I up to ask for the bay colt for Monday. Sorrowful altogether, Andy, chastenin' the land an stopping the hunt. A national calamity it's likely to be," moaned Father Con. "The inspectors is pokin' their noses to every pig-sty in the country to see if there is a cow within and she sick. They found a shut house up at old O'Deas' but yesterday and he not being best pleased they would not take his word, told them to open it themselves if they would not believe him. They did——" said Father Con, after a pause, "O'Deas' two gun-dogs, one of them a regular savage, were inside. Constable Magee was quite objective too, to the piece out of his trouser."

"Was he bitten?" said Andy. "Did the dog draw the blood?"

"Oh! no doubt, no doubt," replied Father Con absently. "He happened to be foremost man. There would be soft chewing in Magee's leg," he added thoughtfully. "But his language was outrageous for a Christian man."

Father Con laid his bicycle down; he came on with his freckled face alight with hope.

"I was thinkin', Andy," he whispered, "there are

the Ballymacshan hare dogs, and a drag—— there'd be no manner of fear of that across the country, because we could arrange it. Anyhow, it would be over when they came down on us, and we'd have had the gallop. If—the bay was short of work," suggested Father Con temptingly, "I'd ride him for ye with them."

"If a man on a horse lays the drag you are welcome to him," said Andy firmly, "but if 'tis a foot man, leave him be. Neither wire or coped walls troubles the fellow on his own feet, and I killed a horse once making after one of them. So do you find out, Father."

Father Con promised that his own cousin Dempsey should lay the drag on his foxy pony, "or Timsy," he added, "but he wouldn't be any use." Father Con sighed, he confided in low tones to Andy that he was afraid Timsy was going utterly to the dogs.

"Three times now I have met him and he drunk"—the priest shook his head—"and when I spoke to him I only got impyedince thrun in me face."

Honora's voice came shrilly across the yard;

"I tell ye, Anne, I'd thrust Herself——"

"Honora Madden, is it off to the witches ye have been?" demanded Father Con, immediately becoming pastor and hurrying across the yard.

Honora's squawk of "Holy Mary, his riverence," could be plainly heard, but Honora herself was invisible.

"She has run off, being ashamed of herself," explained Mrs. Cafferty severely. "I'll tell on ye, Honora. Away up the mountains to the old trick-

sther—what day was it?—last Thursday three weeks, the day the two big chickens was whipt by the fox, and the rats took me two dozen eggs. I'm not like to forgit it."

"If I catch ye runnin' to witches," said Father Con, addressing the empty air severely. "Do ye hear me, Honora Madden? I'll call ye from the alther. Where in the name of Hivin is she hid?" he added, looking doubtfully into the barrel churn and turning three old tubs to one side. "Ye had besht come out, Honora, not be hidin' behind twigs."

"An' didn't his riverence below take a cough-mixther from Nancy," boomed Honora suddenly, from the loft above the dairy, "an' it to cure him too? If there's herrubs that can kape off infection, Father, an' do it proper, what harrum can there be to get them from a clever ould woman?"

Father Con looked up, and Honora looked down defiantly.

"Save us," he remarked. "Wasn't she weighty for flight up the ladder?"

"Some has knowledge and some has not," went on Mrs. Madden, commencing a ponderous descent. "Lay yer hand to the ladther, Father; if it shook me off I'd be a dead woman. — And some has not," repeated Honora, as she reached the yard. "Some go to cure horses with pints of crame, an' it scarce."

Here Father Con reddened, for this referred to a secret compact with the fat dairy-woman. When his horse had been ill with blood-poisoning and milk difficult to procure, Andy had spared some. The influences of the Church had changed most of the

daily quarts of milk into cream, to the serious depletion of Andy's weekly takings and vast advantage to the sick horse.

"Maybe 'twas in all innocence ye wint, Honora," said Father Con briskly. "And as ye say, of course, some things has power to put away the infection. Isn't it mighty active ye are, Honora, flightin' up the stheps?"

"An' that's all he had to say," remarked Anne Cafferty bitterly, "agin mortail sin."

Father Con beat a retreat to Andy, who was looking round for Creina. He missed the child when she was away. Andy was uneasy. Gossip ran as water through a sieve across the country-side. Timsy had chattered in his cups, and Patsy had whispered and old Danny had told it on.

Timsy had declared that he meant to have Creina Casey at Dromin before a month was out, and that, despite the girl's own wishes. Timsy had boasted, balefully, of his own clever ideas, without revealing their nature.

The gossip caused no stir in the kitchen, because Honora said that Timsy would be the same as another to the gerril in a year's time; and Anne was also callous, but Andy watched uneasily.

Creina had made up her mind to marry Mat; she was shyly, foolishly happy, confident of breaking down her mamma's opposition.

"Where is Creina?" Andy inquired.

"She is away home with a message," replied Mrs. Cafferty. "Her mamma sent for her in a hurry."

Andy drove to the town to do some business. On his way home he met Mrs. Henessy in her side-car

with a yellow tin trunk all but forcing her coachman off his driving-seat, and further embellishments of band boxes, various baskets, shawls, and knobby bundles clustered round Grace on the far side. Mrs. Henessy herself clasped a worn old cardboard box, holding all the things she had forgotten to pack up.

She nodded to Andy, stopping the car to tell him how herself and Grace were away to her cousins in Dublin for three days.

Andy drove homewards, taking scant interest in the news. He took more in Patsy's feverish announcement that the polis were up to Dromin and found a sick cow hid away in an ould corner with hay all piled over the door and a little tunnel through it for the men to get in to her.

"She has it," declaimed Patsy, "sorra a doubt. They shot her and there's talks of a great fine. I met Jimmy their man on the road. 'Kape yer own side so,' says I to him, 'and don't be givin' it to us'; and I came home flyin'."

So Timsy was stricken. Andy went in slowly. His own herd of cows might be the next. He might not hear until he had landed in Australia that the joys of Honora's heart were all dead, and that he must begin again to get milkers together. But it was time enough to weep when sorrow came. Andy called for his tea and for Creina. He had bought her a little blue locket on a thin gold chain as a last present.

"She is not back yet," said Anne, laying tea. "And she was not to be an hour away."

The silvery morning had changed as spring days will. Bleak cold had elbowed the soft south

whisper from the world. Storm battalions came marching, then batteries charged with bitter sleet and rain.

"And she will be drowned if she delays," added Anne. "I hiled ye an egg, Misther Andy, and fried a slice of bacon. Ye look tired out. There's quality within, so there's hot bread too—two soorts."

The quality consisted of Miss Moroney, who was taking tea with Kitty. The Deanes were out.

Kitty was strangely saddened. She spoke as bitterly of England as if it had been a penal settlement, and she railed against the curtailing of the hunting.

"But if you like Ireland so much," said Miss Moroney softly, "you might stay here."

Kitty blushed fiercely. "Perhaps, when Andy comes back," she said lightly, "I may get a companion and run over for a winter."

Miss Moroney sighed.

"Costello," she remarked, "may be better off by then."

Miss Kitty, nose in air, hoped that Miss Moroney was right. "For when people waste money," sniffed Kitty, "it's just as well that—someone—should prevent them——"

"You think it wasted? You know about it? He told you?" said Miss Moroney, in a surprised voice.

"He did not, but I know. Yes, I think it very much wasted," said Kitty severely.

Eleanor Moroney put down a piece of hot cake as if she did not wish to have anything further to do with Kitty's tea. She asked coldly for her pony-trap.

"I did not think that anyone knew; I cannot understand how you have found out," she murmured, half to herself. And then aloud, "And you think, Miss Adair, that Costello ought to mend his walls, and buy new clothes and keep his income—while I," said Eleanor fiercely, "have looked on his sacrifice as a noble one."

"I suppose heaps of people would not do it," said Kitty, blushing; "but it was his own fault at first, now wasn't it?"

"To let Joan come here for a week was perhaps wrong." The grey-haired woman got up. "I'm disappointed in you, Kitty Adair. Costello is fond of you and you know it, and I came to speak for him to-day, but now I'll say nothing. There need not have been anything beyond an understanding, child, between you, until things improved."

"But Costello—Mr. Moroney is going to marry Elaine," stammered Kitty, raked through by this frontal attack.

"Oh! He very likely will," said Miss Moroney sharply. "She has got some money and some sense. Good-bye."

Kitty watched the pony-trap drive away and then sat down amid the ruins of her peace of mind.

Was she narrow-minded? Absurd! A man who spent his all on the impossible person concealed somewhere, and who sent his aunt to do his love-making! Elaine had told her all about it. Elaine knew and Lancelot knew, and Mr. Moroney certainly meant to marry Elaine, and it was all quite absurd.

"We can get away in three days," said Madge, rushing in. "Kitty, do you hear? We're going to

London first. I thought you might go on to stay at your Aunt Madeline's and that Noll and I would go abroad for a month."

Kitty's Aunt Madeline lived at Surbiton, in a red-brick villa which was twin brother to any other red-brick villa in the row. There was a garden at the back about the size of a table-cloth and a tennis lawn in front which was three feet two short, and Aunt Madeline kept a victoria, paid afternoon calls, and played bridge for threepence a hundred.

Kitty felt that she was outside the picture of her sister's life—a third colour jarring on two which blended. They gave her a home, but their own plans came first.

"I could not go with you?" she asked a little tremulously.

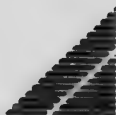
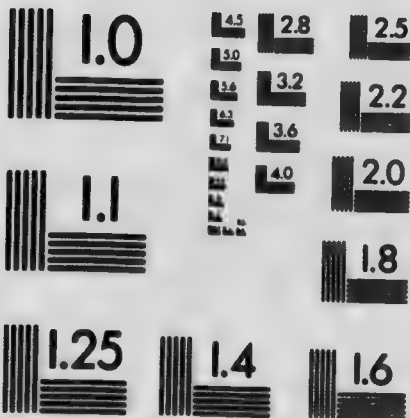
Madge shook her pretty head as she explained impatiently that they were going to Paris and that, of course, Oliver would want to see funny plays, which Kitty could not be taken to, and how a girl would hamper a young married pair.

Kitty understood a little bitterly. She would go to Aunt Madeline's and then spend a blameless summer at Deane's Hollow, playing the chatty lawn tennis and the evil-tempered croquet of the place; going to hilarious picnics at Thurston Abbey and generally rioting in the gaieties of a select county. And all the time she would long for the grey Irish clouds rambling aimlessly across the sky, and the dear, untidy country with its scent of bog-lands blowing across it, and the green fields which were so perfect to ride across. Kitty could not take to superior English coachmen as she could to Patsy and Pattie. She could not rush into neat English kitchens to demand



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potato cakes in five minutes as there were people to tea, or to sit down when Anne was alone and hear weird old Irish fairy-tales and legends.

"Very well," said Kitty listlessly. "Very well. I can ride all the summer on the brown horse."

But this hope was also nipped. Noll wished to put in proper stables. All the horses must go out to grass.

"We are going to leave them here," said Madge, "and send for them in the autumn. Much better if you went abroad with the Dicksons, Kitty, to improve your French, instead of thinking of hunting next winter. I'll ride the brown for you."

Miss Adair looked into the fire and said nothing.

Andy's voice rose outside. "What is that, Patsy? She is not at home yet? Did she go into the town, do you know? And a black night coming up."

Andy was growing anxious.

"She did not," Patsy observed, "but I understands that Mrs. Henessy sent for her particular and she is away there to see her."

"Above at Dromin." Andy strolled out.

The clouds had massed blackly dark. The night was bitterly cold, white flakes of snow swirled softly down, varied by biting sleet. Andy strolled on. Creina would come home across the fields, over the style near Mat O'Niell. Mat was driving in some calves and Andy called to him. They stood talking of the dread epidemic and then suddenly Andy jumped.

"Sent for particular, by Mrs. Henessy!" And had he not met Mrs. Henessy driving to catch the train to Dublin! All Patsy's hints swept up black as the

storm clouds over head. Andy turned to Mat and told him his fears.

"If he could scheme that she be compromised," half-whispered Andy. . . . "Ye see Creina is that sort, she'd marry him. And that is his game, Mat. He has a wrong message sent to her. He is keeping her there above."

The big young Irishman's face worked, his eyes were blue balls of fire.

"The dirty schemer," he said calmly. Yet his calmness took him leaping across the yard, hurling a stout pony from the dim hole it lived in; casting harness on to it with lightning-like deftness; tearing an inside trap from another dark hole, and standing ready to go, almost before Andy realized that anything was being got ready.

"Will ye come too?" Mat asked simply.

There was no thought of coats, though the storm was thickening. They were hardy men, accustomed to exposure. The pony fled from the whirl of the ashplant, the trap rocked on the rutty lane.

"It will not hasten us to break a spring," said Andy softly.

"That is thrue for ye, Andy. Dolly, woa! woa!"

It was not far to Dromin. Dolly fled along the narrow roads at the best of her crippled chain paces. The sleet was coming down in earnest now, the wind blew venomously, in searching gusts.

A blur of yellow marked the front windows at Dromin, but when Andy knocked at the door no answer came to him. He knocked again loudly. "Come around to the back door, Mat."

The back door was closed, but a little manipulation got the loose bolt of the lock back.

Then Mat and Andy, dripping, strode into the house. The kitchen was empty, the fire out, piles of unwashed plates and cups and dishes were heaped on the table. There was dust and dirt in every corner.

The door into the passage was also locked. Mat's shoulder saw to that. They came to the little front parlour and saw light under the door.

"Open this, Timsy, afore we busht it," roared Mat savagely.

Someone called out, someone scuffled. Timsy's voice, thick with whisky, replied that he had no use for callers and that he'd trouble Mat O'Niell to take his likes off home.

Timsy spoke with difficulty, as though he had something else to do.

"A broken door is nothing to this house," said Andy softly. "At it, Mat."

The door resisted for a moment, cracked, and yielded. They burst into an atmosphere fiery with heat, reeking of untamed whisky, to see Creina struggling free from Timsy's hand across her mouth. Her eyes washed out with crying, her aspect woe-begone. When Timsy emerged from under the table where Mat threw him when he had finished with him, he was slightly soberer but bitter with temper.

"Don't trouble the devil with him to-night, Mat," cautioned Andy.

"How dare ye, ye vilyn!" breathed Mat, trembling to be at his foe afresh.

Mr. Timsy Henessy, from the floor, spoke threateningly of the law; be sure he would drag Mat before every tribunal in Cahervally, that he would charge

five pounds apiece for broke doors and locks and——

"And how much for a broken nose, Timsy Henessy?" suggested Andy contemptuously. "Now tell us it all, Creina. Open the window Mat, there isn't air enough in here to float a toy balloon on."

"I came and he kep' me," sobbed Creina. "He would not let me go home." She clung to Andy. "He locked the dours, and if I sthirred he held me."

"Creina come up to see me and she stayed to talk to me. It's aisy for her to be lyin' out of it now," said Timsy thickly, and rising. "That's the way of them good-for-nothin' gerrils."

When he got up again he had to mourn two front teeth, and his eyes were flames of futile rage.

"Have a care," breathed Mat, "for begorra, ye dirty vilyn, next time I might hit ye in airnest."

Timsy sat down dejectedly upon a wicker chair, evidently wondering what "airnest" would be like.

"He kep' me here," went on Creina, "and locked all the doors, and not a soul in the place but himself. And he said afther I sthayin' up here I'd have to marry him or not a craythur would pass the time of day to me. And I knew it was thrue for him. Oh! Andy, what brought ye?" She clung to the old man's hand, sobbing helplessly.

"It was a nate kind of a game," said Andy. "Nate entirely. And if ye had not made a boast of it when you had drirk taken, I might have thought Creina was at home and let her be."

Timsy murmured the law forlornly and with a lisp. He was afraid to say anything else. "And Creina up as a withness," he whimpered nastily. "Up as a

withness. That'll look well, Mr. Andy Quin ; she here all alone."

"If Creina is to be dhragged in it," said Mat, stepping forward, "I might as well not be resthrainin' meself, but finish him now."

Timsy upset the wicker chair and tilted over backwards, as he plunged out of the way. Creina smiled faintly and Andy's eyes twinkled.

It had been a clever plot of Timsy's. He had given out that his mother was to leave on a Thursday, and she had gone on Wednesday. He had got his mother to write a letter asking to see Creina the day before she went and only sent it when he was alone in the house, for he had given the delighted maid a holiday. Timsy wanted Creina's money speedily. With a drunkard's cunning he had seen his way and nearly succeeded.

Now, supine on the floor with a wicker chair across him, he glanced up balefully at Mat and Andy.

A cupboard at the end of the room showed two quart bottles of whisky ; there was another just opened on the table. Andy's eyes twinkled softly.

"Will ye sit on him, Mat, while I keep him sober for the night?" he said. "Sthand over him, he'll fight for this." Then, with quiet precision, Andy poured the opened bottle out of the window, and smashed the full ones on the sill.

"Ye might be a bit lonesomer than ye thought ye'd be," he said pleasantly. "Get hold of a coat, Creina, the skies is teemin' down."

Timsy lay alternately cursing and weeping, his swollen nose sniffing the perfumes of his lost whisky in delirious despair ; his crooked mouth threatening revenge. He knew when he grew sober how he would

long for the new bite of his fiery spirit and must endure until next day.

"Lave him there now, the scoundrel," said Mat. "Make a move, Timsy Henessy, and I tell ye I'll hit ye. All the holiness in the wurruld won't hold me hand gintle for ever."

Timsy moaned "gentle" from his bleeding mouth. "I will be even with ye yet," lisped Timsy from the floor, his voice a snarl of malice.

Old Andy stood over the prostrate drunkard. "There are min up for murder, Thomas Henessy," he said quietly, "who would not blacken their hand by putting it into yours. If your decent father turns in his grave to-night, it will be for shame of his son."

"Wait," muttered Timsy, his eyes on Mat.

"Leave him," counselled Mat. "Come on, Andy."

Someone stirred in the yard outside. A lantern danced will-o'-the-wisp fashion across the wet darkness, and a second light gleamed in the cow-house.

"The men are up here," said Andy, in surprised tones. "Nice work if they had found Creina Casey in the parlour. Who's there?"

The lantern, raised, lighted up the troubled face of Timsy's herdsman, a shambling, drunken little fellow, who earned his employer's favour by drinking with him.

"God save us, Misther Quin," he ejaculated. "Bad news here, sor. I was onaisy about two of the milch cows, so meself and Jim Costello run up to see them. There two bad and more sickenin'. God help us. We're the next for the bullet an' the polis."

Mat went across to the cow-house: Two poor

beasts were slaving, shifting their sore feet, unmistakably stricken. Besides the fine for obstructing the cause of justice, Timsy would lose all his cows.

"Not that they'll be so much loss to him," said Andy, as the calash sped into the gloom, "for he hasn't put in a new one since his father was taken, but selling all the calves and letting the old ones do. It won't hit him as it did Sweeney or anyone that had good stock. Save us, Mat, keep the pony straight."

Mat remarked simply that he was thinking of Timsy, being wishful he had hit him proper; he forbore to explain that his driving was hampered by his having placed one arm round Creina, who was still quivering from her outburst of sobs.

Creina crept away to her room at Ballinmena. Mat led the pony home across the fields, a perilous journey in the darkness.

Andy warmed himself over the banked-up kitchen fire, taking a drink of steaming punch to keep out a chill.

"I am afraid of that Timsy," he said, as he put out the lights. "Is that you, Anne? We have her."

A vision in a red-flannel petticoat and shawl padded into the kitchen.

"It is all right," said Andy. "Creina was just coming; she thought we would send for her and it so bad. She is gone to bed."

"She is, and shakin' the room cryin'," said Anne Cafferty; "don't we know Timsy tried to hould on to her above? We're not fools."

"An' I am afraid of him, Anne," said Andy. "The eyes in his head were like serpents' and we comin' away. Mat gave him a couple of knocks and called

him a few ill names, and I tell you, I'm not easy—I'm afraid for my little girl when I'm gone."

"Sure even if she has to marry Timsy, he'll die soon," comforted Anne. "He is sure to, Mither Andy, so don't be frettin'."

CHAPTER XV

WHEN Miss Moroney had left Kitty, very much disappointed with a young woman to whom she had quite lost her heart, she had first of all cast the English girl aside and congratulated herself on Costello's escape. And then she had begun to go over all the conversation, and wonder.

"Costello," she said that night, as they sat down to a dinner of game, "Costello, I did not think that you had ever told Elaine or Lancelot about—well, Elliot and—the rest of it all."

Costello upset the plover on to the table-cloth.

"Thank you, Maria," he said, "pick it up. Now do you think, Aunt Ellen, that one tells secrets to—to jackdaws—or talking parrots, or——" Costello had to pause for a metaphor.

"Then if you didn't, how does she know?" said Eleanor Moroney. "How does she know, Costello?"

Maria left the room.

"She does not know," said Moroney briefly, "though she'd like to. If she had a rack handy I'd have been on it long ago, but maybe she thinks she knows, and that does quite as well for Elaine Gore."

Miss Moroney fell into fresh thought. If Elaine did not know how could she have told Kitty? The lives of other people are very delicate things to meddle

with, but the grey-haired woman loved her nephew, and the new sad look on his face hurt her.

"Andy's guests are going almost immediately," she said absently, but with her eyes fixed on Costello.

She was not surprised to see him flinch, then grow pale, and put his plover to one side as if he had no appetite. His eyes grew very wistful.

"Tasteless things, plover," he said gruffly. "Who's going? Oh! the Deanes. Poor Mrs. D. did not make much of her horse-dealing over here. And she never really cared for the hunting."

"But—Kitty did," said Miss Moroney. "That's pheasant, Costello."

Costello endeavoured to feed his spaniel with pheasant and seemed oblivious of that animal's disgust.

"Oh, Miss Kitty!" he said at last. "Cess, cess, Duck. Aren't you hungry, my boy? She won't look down the field I'm riding in now, though she was friendly enough once. Wants no help with the motor these days, and doesn't fall off any more."

His aunt sighed quietly. Her own life had been spoilt, she wanted Costello to be happy. Still thinking, she went back to the cosy old sitting-room and hated the thought of Elaine Gore pulling it to pieces.

"I used to like Kitty," said Miss Eleanor to herself. "And I cannot understand what she meant and how she knows."

So, still wrapped in wonder, she asked Elaine to tea, arranged that Costello should be out, and under the guise of confidence picked that young lady's brains.

Her astonishment as Elaine—who had never found

Costello's aunt so friendly—talked on, was difficult to conceal. A light came into Miss Moroney's eyes and she began to understand.

"But what a clever girl you are to have found out everything," cooed Miss Eleanor, "and, of course, you think it ought to be stopped, and so do papa and Lancelot. Costello has no *right* to waste his income like that. No, he has not, and—you've known of it for a year. Papa found it out, did he? Oh! through your cousin in the bank that the cheques come back to. Yes, my dear." Elaine was revealing sacredly confidential matters. "He told Lancelot. Oh, no, my dear, I'm afraid Costello will be late or perhaps not home at all. He went up to his cousin's at Moyarta."

This was strictly true, but he had not gone that day, and was, in fact, reading in his own study, waiting for Miss Gore to leave.

She did at last, fluttering forth in bird-like fashion; affectionately pecking at her hostess's cheek, driving away with the pleased certainty that Miss Eleanor had at last realized that Elaine would one day reign at Doonedurra and was trying to be civil.

"Cunning old thing," chirped Elaine to herself.

Miss Moroney in the meantime was taking a great deal upon herself. She sat at her writing-table and began to write hurriedly just as Costello came in.

"She's gone," said her nephew gloomily, lifting up the fresh tea-pot brought in for him. "Not like you to spend the afternoon with Elaine, Aunt Eleanor."

"Don't disturb me, Costello," said Miss Moroney. "I am very busy, I can't talk. That girl is a chatter-pie—a mag-box——"

"If you write those things in your letter," said Costello thoughtfully, "they'll think——"

"I have already made three mistakes," said his aunt wrathfully, "and the post will be gone. Costello, if you knew how important it was—ring the bell. Mary, take that immediately and don't loiter or Dan Keefe will have taken the pillar-box."

Costello thought it would be heavy. Mary found that the rest of the letters had gone and would very likely have been in time with this one if she had not remembered one she thought she would write herself. When she reached the box at the gate Danny Keefe the postman was half a mile away.

"There is no difference in a day," said Mary, "an' poshts come agin. An' there is no use in drawin' the missus or me tellin' her I was late."

Two days after this Kitty was packing in desultory fashion; putting out a variety of garments which she wished to give away, and talking to Creina as she did so.

"You can have this pink blouse, Creina, and that mauve hat, and there's a coat for Anne, and now for Honora——"

"Yer skirt would not mate half-way around Honora, miss," counselled Creina, who was standing at the window, staring out.

Kitty said she would like to give Honora something.

"There is yer ould tan cape she is sot on to milk in, wet mornings," said Creina. "Here is the man with the letters. They are fine and late to-day."

Kitty opened hers. She gasped as she did so, read a letter and looked at the date.

"This was written two days ago. I ought to have

had it yesterday morning," she cried. "Miss Moroney will have expected an answer."

"Mary Anne Crowe at the post office is terrible cureysome," said Creina absently. "Often she delays things to see what's in thim."

Kitty upset all her gifts as she sprang to find pen and ink. She read the letter and re-read it before she bit her pen handle and began to reply.

"I must write at once," said Kitty, "to tell her that I was mistaken." Kitty's cheeks were scarlet.

Miss Eleanor Moroney had taken a great deal upon herself. She had written to Kitty and trusted her with the bones of the Moroney family skeleton.

For Elliot Moroney, Costello's brother, was not dead, but in prison in New York for attempted murder. Just before this he had married a very impossible person, a Miss Rosie Rockhaller, who had served out blue lightnings and other American poisons at a particularly low-class bar.

Elliot had always been a black sheep, but he was fond of the brassy-haired girl to whom he had given his name, and all the money which Costello might have had went to keep her respectably in a house in New York and to mitigate Elliot's life in prison.

"The murder was a mere drunken quarrel," wrote Miss Eleanor, "but, unfortunately, the other man was the son of a senator or something important. Now you know how Elaine has got hold of a garbled story, and it is only fair to Costello to let you know, because he cares for you, Kitty, and you are a nice child and I want to see him happy. If he is to call write at once. I will make an excuse and send him over. The ties may not last for ever; Elliot is dying in prison."

"My goodness, gracious ME!" said Kitty, laying down the letter. "Oh! what a pig I've been."

Her cheeks were very pink, she looked curiously troubled and undecided.

"Creina!" she said.

"There is a sight of people beyond at Mat's," said Creina. "A man was to come to see the calves to-day, but there is no price for anything now."

Kitty only wrote a few words in a letter; she handed it to Creina.

"Creina," she said excitedly, "get Patsy, send him to Doonedurra at once on his bicycle, the letter might be two days in the post."

"Patsy is gone out," presently said Creina absently; "will I send Patty?"

"Send Patsy, he is only exercising. Send Patsy, Creina, at once. Tell him to fly over, the roads are dry."

Creina put the letter into the pocket of her apron. She went downstairs, to be swept back from the door by the inrush of Honora Madden, who seethed with excitement.

"Mat has it! God help and save us! Next door! Mat has it, the craythur. The inspecthor was there airly and they are back now to shoot the cattle. They found two bastes reelin' with it in the four-acre field. And Mat swears they are not his at all, not his cows, but no one would listen. Yerra wisha, Creina! it's no fit place——"

For Creina, with a scream of horror, had rushed out across the yard.

"She was near to hurt the little bonham with the hurry that's on her," said Mrs. Madden, in offended tones, "and she whirled me shawl from me back when I put out a hand to sthop her."

"Ye might have broke the news to her gintle, Honora," said Anne Cafferty thoughtfully. "Poor little Creina."

"Breakin' or no, Danny will be dippin' her in Jaysey's fluid afore she'll come back in here," said Honora firmly. "Danny, Dan, have you the bottle of shmell sthuff or the glory of limon*—the red stuff? Creina is off to Mat's."

"I saw Mat at the fince," said Danny. "Someone druv thim bastes onto his fields, they are not his. Two ould sthrangers of cows, dyin' on their feet. Someone druv thim, I tell ye."

Andy hurried across to his herdsman.

"I was always afraid of Timsy," he said. "He did it, Danny. He has lots of old things unbranded and that boy of his is as twisty as himself. He hid these two away and did it in the night after we came away. Better have left him the whisky, Danny, when I went over."

Danny lighted his pipe and wished Timsy in the place which Danny appeared to think was the only suitable home for Mr. Henessy.

"And even ould Horny might turrrn from a thrick like that one," snarled Danny. "If we could prove it. Ye're not goin' across, sir?"

"It's so near us now it doesn't matter," said Andy, "I am, Dan; I must see Mat."

"Vo! Vo! Vo!" murmured Honora. "Folly on do ye, Danny, with the bottles. Folly on. If the cows bates Herself I'll be like to lose the flesh off me bones—frettin'."

Danny, observing fiercely that it would be the great loss entirely, took the disinfectants and went.

Mat's place was in a turmoil. He swore the cows

* Chloride of lime.

were not his. He pointed out his brands. He had no old grey stripper, no red cow of twelve or fourteen. And of what avail? Slavering, hobbling, the beasts were loose in his herds. They were emaciated, far advanced in the disease.

"Timsy did it." Mat raised his drawn face to heaven. "He follyed us over with them two sick cows to do me the mischief. They are Timsy Henessy's cows that he druv over to ruin me, Andy."

Timsy had succeeded. In the terrible hours which followed, Mat watched and knew there would be no redress. He would be paid something for the slaughtered beasts, enough perhaps to stave off the money-lender. Dumb and hopeless, he watched the bullets find their mark, the young beasts which would have meant success to him stagger and drop. He gave no aid, he made no protest, the firm world seemed swept from under his feet. He scarcely heard the girl who stood dry-eyed beside him repeating over and over again that it was her fault. "Becos ye came to fetch me. Because ye angered him for me, Matty."

The spring day looked greyly on the ruin of the little farmer. If the beasts had been his own he might have come through it, but their present value was all which would be paid and they had stood security for their price.

It was grey night before the trenches were dug, another day before the bodies were out of sight, with the reek of disinfectants offending the air.

Mat was numb. He moved listlessly across his empty fields, looked with wet eyes at the mound where so much life had been tumbled in. The inspector was a blatant little person, rather inclined

to accuse Mat of trying to conceal the outbreak. The police were sympathetic in their own way, but they were there to do their duty and to get it all over as quickly as possible. Mat would be paid for his loss, but not enough, not nearly enough. Every penny he received would go to the man who had lent him the money. The farm would be left bare. It would mean starting again from the bottom.

Mat had no energy left to do it. He stood there hopeless, taking it with the fatalism of his race. It was God's will—one must not grumble.

But sometimes a dull fire of wrath would smoulder in his tired eyes, for he knew that he might have escaped but that an enemy had betrayed him. Timsy had come through the night with his sick beasts, and there was no way now to fasten the deed upon him.

"If we had but to leave him the whisky," said Mat drearily, "he would not have had steadiness enough in his mind or his feet to do it to me."

Once Mat's fingers cuddled lovingly about the stock of his old gun as he thought of a revenge which would send Timsy's craven spirit shrieking to its Maker, as he thought of a shot in return for the betraying; then he laid the gun down.

"I will bate him," said Mat to himself. "I will make a quare thing of him, but I will not kill him, becos that would be on oneself and not on him."

Father Con, all kindly pastor, now came to sympathize, to talk of the future.

But all sympathy falls as salt on a wound at first. Mat listened drearily, without interest.

"When it is over," he said, "and the scare of it gone, I will be away, I think, to the Sthates. There is always work there, they tells me. Danny O'Hegan

would buy the interest here off me, and the ould aunt go to her brother."

Creina's hands went to her throat. The desolation of the slaughter, the hideous taste of death and burial, were as nothing to the desolation which she felt now.

Mat was going away. She crept over to him softly.

"Mat, ye didn't mane that. Mat, ye will not do the immigration?"

"I'm thinkin' so," he said dully. "What matter? I'm not for yer father's dather now, Creina Casey. I'm a ruined man."

Though, in his heart, Mat never meant to go. Of what avail to cry that she would work with him, slave in fields and in house; stand by him in his poverty? Creina knew how proud her people were, knew that Mat would not marry her against their wishes now, whatever he might have done. She would be married to Timsy. She saw it all before her. The drive to the whitewashed chapel on the hill, the coarse chaff and merriment, the priests waiting, and Timsy . . . Timsy with his bloated face, his breath reeking of whisky. Then to be driven there to Dromin—his wife.

"I will get away to service. I won't. I won't," muttered Creina; but she was young and helpless. Who would take her? How would she get away secretly?

"Oh! if God thought, He'd never have done this," wailed Creina, flying away.

"The wits is from the child," said Father Con kindly, "with the sorrow and the noise and all."

"And all," said Mat, getting up. "God spare Andy, Father, that it won't cross to him."

"There'll be great argyments between the virtues of blessed wather and Herself's charrums if it doesn't," remarked Father Con thoughtfully. "The two ould wimmin has done all they could any-ways."

Andy, coming home from the town later, saw a desolate little figure crouching down by the road, waiting for him.

"Creina, girsha," he said, letting the pony go, "you will do yourself a mischief to cry like that. They'll pay Mat, child."

"But not enough," sobbed Creina, "not enough; for cows is down and he owes their price, and so he is away to Ameriky, Uncle Andy, when he can sell the farrum. Going for always."

"You can stay here," said Andy, "till he makes a home for you out beyond."

"They will not let me," said Creina dully. "I may talk, but I knows that. I will be above at Dromin with the heart broke in me, Uncle Andy, watchin' Timsy dhrinkin' me money."

A dog stepped from the hedge, putting his nose against Creina's hands—a mongrel, half sheep-dog and half terrier, shivering with fear.

"He was afraid of the guns," Creina said. "He came across with me—poor Snap; there will be no one to care for him soon," she sobbed again.

Andy walked slowly into the house, his kind old face lined with trouble. It was only little Creina Casey, who would forget it all in a few years' time, a girl of the people who must work and suffer, but Andy loved the child.

He knew Mat's affairs. Five or six hundred pounds might save him, pay his debts, re-stock his farm.

A telegram lay on the table. It was from the hotel in London, reserving his room. A letter had come by the second post from the Shipping Company, writing to say that they were greatly pressed for cabins, and if by any chance he was prevented sailing would he wire to them, as they would dispose of his place to a gentleman who particularly wanted to travel by the Red Star; there were other letters, all about his journey.

Andy read them. Anne, greatly excited, brought in his tea, and outside, leaning against the wall, stood Creina, her hands up to her face, her tear-dimmed eyes looking steadily across to the little farm in the trees.

"The young heart'll be broken in her," muttered Andy. "Broken, and one is but young once—but young once."

Miss Adair meantime fussed about the house in the uneasy fashion of the human being who expects something.

She expressed horror at the outbreak at Mat's; she was very sorry, but supposed they must pay for all the things they killed; she packed vaguely and at intervals, and she ran to the window when a step sounded outside.

Mrs. Deane said that Kitty was getting on her nerves and asked whom she expected, after which remark Kitty went upstairs and sat in her own room, which did not look onto the front and where she chafed in secret.

She had been there for some time when Timmins knocked politely at the door to announce that a gentleman was waiting for Miss Adair in the sitting-room.

Kitty altered the arrangement of her hair three times in two feverish minutes: she took off and then put on her string of pearls; she wished she had put on her pink blouse.

She decided that she would be quite dignified and on no account commit herself to anything definite; she took the pearls off for the last time and changed them for turquoises and she went downstairs.

"The Captain and Mrs. Deane is away in the car," announced Anne Cafferty; "they will not be back to tea, Miss Kitty."

"Make potato cakes, Anne dear," said Kitty. "I'm hungry, and they are so lovely."

Mrs. Cafferty said, "I will so, missie," in affectionate tones, "though me hand'll be heavy from the fear on us," said Anne.

Kitty opened the door, knowing her cheeks to be fiery pink, her manner flustered.

"Oh, so glad to find you in, Miss Adair," said Mr. Lancelot Gore. "And alone," he added impressively.

As a stone cleaves clear water, so Kitty's spirits sank into a chill abyss. She sat down dully, she tried to shake hands with some faint show of civility. A leaden cloud of weariness settled on the evening. Kitty looked through it at Mr. Gore. How long would he stay? Supposing—anyone else came; through her thoughts she half heard and barely understood a stream of conversation which Mr. Gore let flow. He was so very sorry they were leaving. How sorry he could not say—here he coughed. Papa had advised him to come over, and not to write.

Write about what, Kitty wondered dully.

Yes, the absence of Miss Adair would make, apparently, Cahervally a desert island set in a sea

of regret. Papa said Miss Adair "ought to have been an Irishman—or—er—marry one," said Lancelot, with a distinct effort.

"Marry one!" said Kitty, her cheeks aflame, her eyes on the door.

"Marry someone fond of sport as she was, who would pilot her out hunting, buy her horses, and look after her. Yes, papa thought people were much happier married——"

Anne Cafferty brought in the tea-tray. Kitty wondered what on earth Lancelot had been talking about; he looked displeased at Anne's entrance.

"I saw Costello as I came over," Lancelot remarked. "Oh, I see your super-excellent potato cakes, Mrs. Cafferty. He was just going to call upon my people. My sister, I believe, had asked him to see her horse put in harness."

Kitty poured some tea into the cream jug; her heart was really lead now.

Her letter must have been at Doonedurra some hours ago, and Costello had gone to the Gores' . . . she put her head up proudly, but her cheeks were as white as they had been pink.

"Yes, I took the note on my way here. I rode my new motor-cycle. Costello said that he would go. I myself do not approve of his attentions to Elaine, but papa thinks that with good advice all would be different."

Kitty lost all interest in the passage of time. She sat with a cup of chilling tea and an untasted potato cake, wondering sometimes what Lancelot Gore was talking about.

Staring at him she was aware of extra spruceness in his kit; of a white carnation in his button-hole

and of his best blue serge suit allied to boots with patent-leather toes of towny aspect.

As through a mist, Kitty heard that she ought really to remain in Ireland: that she would be much happier there with someone of real worth by her side; and then suddenly, with astonishment which warred with suppressed and unmaidenly merriment, she realized that Lancelot was proposing marriage to her.

He was leaning forward now over the table with an expression of studied admiration in dull brown eyes, his hand—it was somewhat large—extended as if waiting to clasp hers and his cheeks were pink and his demeanour nervous.

Hysterically Kitty decided that love was not becoming.

"Papa advises it," said Lancelot hopefully. "I feel I—you—that is that I am not repugnant to you, that Ireland is you home. Papa says——"

Kitty woke with an effort. She said hurriedly that she had a bad headache and she had really not heard what Mr. Gore was saying—would he repeat it, what papa said? . . . The pink was drowned in Lancelot's cheeks by a dull flush of wrathful red.

"And as to Ireland," said Kitty hysterically, "I hate it. I'm dying, just dying to get away. It's pink and red—at least its complexion is—and—it's so careful—I mean—er—I——"

Mr. Gore wiped his forehead with a silk pocket-handkerchief. He collected his own scattered wits with difficulty.

"If you will listen now—Miss—er—Kitty. Papa says that——"

"The Campbells are coming," gulped Kitty. "I

mean Noll and Madge. I'm so sorry I missed some of what you said, Mr. Gore. What? The same was all. Oh, but it wasn't, there was heaps more, and, I do hope we'll meet again in England and—— Oh, Oliver."

Kitty burst into sudden peals of laughter with the shrill note of hysteria in them.

"My dear Kit, what is the joke?" remarked Captain Deane, staring at his young sister-in-law reprovingly.

"Mr.—Gore—made it," gasped Kitty. "One I didn't hear—a fresh one—that is—— Yes, Anne, I'm coming." Kitty fled to an imaginary call.

Mr. Gore feared that Miss Adair was not at all well, she had appeared distraited—he pronounced that way, and then had begun to laugh.

"I will write to her," said Lancelot solicitously. "I think that I will go back now; papa will expect me."

"He has been proposing to her," said Madge Deane calmly, "and Kitty has pretended not to understand, and staved him off."

Oliver Deane asked blankly how she could possibly know.

"Potato cakes untouched," said Madge, "tea in a cup undrunk, and Lancelot's confusion. I am not quite a fool. Poor Lancelot! He would answer: 'Papa says he advises it' to the question of 'Will you——' at the altar."

Mr. Gore, very much ruffled and annoyed, mounted his motor-bicycle and was jolted homewards. He believed Kitty's conduct to be the result of shyness and shock, "so completely unnerved," thought Lancelot, "that she really could not listen. Of course,

if the sister had not come in I could have repeated my remarks according to papa's advice, but, dear me——"

Costello Moroney, in difficulties with a young horse, was on the road before him.

"Turn off that puff-puffer," roared Moroney; "there's wire in this fence."

Lancelot did so, with varied remarks as to the folly of giving in to a young horse, as the animal must learn to endure motors.

Costello replied that he'd rather they learnt it with a small wall bounding the road, and led his trembling bay past the bicycle.

"You did not, then, go up to help Elaine," said Lancelot.

"I saw the horse," said Costello drily. "He was collar-marked, so I told her he wasn't likely to trouble her and she could drive off when she liked. You've been to Ballinmena?" asked Moroney, fixing morose eyes on Lancelot's button-hole and boots . . . "*en route* to Bond Street," he added bitterly. "I was thinking of going to see Andy," he added.

"Miss Adair," said Lancelot, "is indisposed." He looked conscious. "She—er—she tells me she could never make up her mind to live in Ireland and—er—I fear she means it, but regrets, yes, regrets the parting with people who cannot live in England."

Costello whistled "Love's young dream," still eyeing the carnation.

"You got that at the Reedys'," he burst out. "Anastasia grows 'em, and you embellished yourself with Stacey's flowers to come over here. So Miss Adair is anxious for her own country; well, it's natural. Good night, Lancelot. I won't tell Stacey."

The motor thrummed into life and Costello's horse was turned round and trotted homewards rapidly.

Kitty's hysteria gave way to leaden depression. She haunted the laneway and the yards, forgetting all her packing. The hours seemed to race or drag. The night was endless, waiting for the morning; and the morning leapt from nine to one with a bound as swift as that of the trained horse across a wall.

No one came to Ballinmena. No answer to her letter. Mrs. Cafferty's last efforts of cooking were left untouched. Chops and fried chicken, omelette, jam tarts. The weary day dragged to tea-time, until Kitt gave up pretending and knew how miserable she was.

"And I wrote and gave myself away," muttered Kitty, "and Costello was at home and never came," and Kitty wished that she were dead with the whole-heartedness of youth which really longs to live its life in its own fashion. She hoped for some message through the bustle of departure; the packing of carts by Patsy, the forgetting of small things, and the hideous discovery that the largest trunk had fallen off with a bump just at the gate.

"Sparin' rope," gasped Patsy, as he wrestled it to its place, "sarin' the ropes that Danny is so sot on. Ye couldn't get a safer place for a condemned man than this, with iviry bit of corrd locked up from the victim."

Kitty drove to the station on the dicky of her sister's car. Both motors were coming after them in charge of Pattie, who was bashfully anxious to "thry his luck in England."

Kitty cried over old Anne; she wept quite forlornly as she wrung Andy's hands: she sniffed as she sowed

sovereigns to be reaped to her memory. The softly littered, untidy yards; the horses were bidden farewell to again and again.

Old Anne, embraced at the last, wept too, saying she would never see Miss Kitty's like. Creina alone said her good-bye dully, the girl was too wretched to care who came or went. Creina's time of service was over, she was to go home next day. She went out, in fact, some time before the Deanes left. Over at last, as all things must be. The car crawled down the rutty lane up which Kitty had often trotted so joyously; it hummed along the road. Ballinmena fell to a blur, the hill, lowering steeply against the sky, was lost to sight as they drew near the town. They passed Dromin, saw Timsy bicycling; the wide streets of Cahervally were with them.

Dear, leisurely donkeys crawling out of their way. Good-humoured, careless people who were quite impervious to the demands of motors; the jarveys dashing along their battered old horses. The porters who meant to do so much and forgot everything at the station. And no one there. Hope dies hard. Kitty walked on the platform, received knocks and bumps from travellers, was fetched at last by her brother-in-law, who wished politely to know if she was coming by a later train. It was over. Ireland would fleet as a dream, grey-skied, purple-hilled, emerald-carpeted, until the boat was reached. Kitty got into the train.

But Creina, walking aimlessly to nowhere, put her hand in her pocket and cried out. Next minute she was hurrying towards Doonedurra, where she met Mr. Moroney and his aunt driving along the road. He looked curiously excited and upset.

He was talking to his aunt, answering her gloomily.

"You'll see to the worst bits of the roof now, won't you?" said Miss Moroney, "and get a new trap. This one is really in pieces."

"I suppose so," said Costello dully.

"Poor Elliot, but he was really dead to us for so long. And you were noble, Costello, through it all."

Moroney grunted.

"With that Gore girl misjudging you," snubbed Eleanor Moroney, "and telling stories to strangers."

"Stories!" said Costello. "What did she say?"

"She found out, somehow, that you were sending money away and she put her own construction on it, and she told—people——" Miss Moroney looked towards Ballinmena and frowned. "And they believed it."

"They have left," said Costello, "and not written to you?"

"I am exceedingly disappointed in Kitty Adair," said Miss Moroney stiffly. "She was not the girl I believed her to be, not at all. There's Creina. I am glad that Miss Adair has left."

Creina signalled to them, and reft a letter from her pocket. She explained how it had been given her by Kitty three days ago, and how the shock of Mat O'Niell's misfortune had made her forget it.

"An' Miss Kitty thinkin' I had Patsy sent on the minnit," said Creina, "on the bicycle."

"That's the good-bye," said Costello, trying not to look interested. His aunt tore the letter open. She read it swiftly, and her face cleared. Then, ignoring Creina's presence, she turned to her nephew and explained how she had interfered with the ordering of his life, and written to Kitty. How Elaine had made false statements which were the direct cause

of Kitty Adair's incivility, and how she, Eleanor Moroney, had found it all out.

"I wrote and told her the *truth*," said Eleanor Moroney, "what you really do, Costello, because I believed the girl was fool enough to be fond of you. And now it's all over and I need not have told her at all."

"How did they go?" cried Costello.

"All on the one car, Captain Deane's," replied Creina.

"Gracious! Goodness ME!!" said Miss Eleanor.

"The Lord above save us!" remarked Creina.

For Costello Moroney's brown horse, which was an animal of spirit, leapt into space at the lash which fell on his sleek back, and pursued his way at an outraged gallop down the rutty lane to Ballinmena.

"They have gone, Costello," gasped his aunt. "It's not a bit of use breaking the springs following them in the wrong direction."

When Costello, encouraging the angry cob, replied that Sadie had not gone, Miss Moroney jerked out that she did not know who Sadie was and that she refused to be upset, and at this point she was skilfully wheeled into the yard at Ballinmena and left alone with the reeking cob as Costello rushed across the yard shouting for Pattie.

"God above save us! Is it the foot and mouth?" said Pattie as he flew from the kitchen.

The train from Cahervally wanders slowly to the junction where the fast train from Cork meets it. Past the low-lying rich fields, past fox coverts which the three travellers had seen drawn; picking up milk

cans and parcels and passengers until at length, awaking to the fact it must be there in time, it makes a final swoop from Oola station and rushes into the junction as if it had never dawdled in its life.

They had ten minutes to wait. The mail train was late. Captain Deane beguiled time by ordering tea-baskets, and Kitty stood alone on the platform filling her tear-dimmed eyes with the beauty of the hills and the quiet country.

Then she wheeled with a scream.

"I've done it," said Mr. Moroney. "I'm sorry if I knocked you, ma'am, but think of it another time; I'm busy now."

It is exceedingly difficult to reserve the thought of a bruised elbow, so feelingly the injured lady made moan to sundry porters who took notice of her.

"We—she—only got the letter to-day," said Costello quickly. "She's not signalled yet. Aunt Eleanor told you—that—I couldn't help myself being so poor. Elliot was in prison and I've kept him and his wife and it took nearly everything I had."

"Elaine told me stories," stammered Kitty, her cheeks poppy-hued, her manner flustered by this sudden happening when all things seemed at an end.

Mr. Moroney called Elaine a bird, but chattering magpie was the one he selected.

"And he's dead," said Costello, "poor Elliot died yesterday. And she is marrying again, so I can buy a little putty and sand and lime for mortar, and——"

"How did you get here?" gasped Kitty.

"I took Sadie," said Costello calmly. "We were close to Ballinmena when I heard. I knew I'd miss you at the station, but I thought if I let her out I might just catch you here, and I did. She was running

like a dream, the darling, and made nothing of forty when I asked it of her. And now, there's the train; you're going off, but we'll part friends," said Costello.

Kitty's hand slipped into his, there were tears in her eyes. She knew that she was muttering something about sorrow and stupidity and rudeness and that something salt was on her cheeks now.

"It's—a rotten place," said Costello, looking round—"here. But you told Lancelot you hated Ireland."

"That was when papa advised him to ask me to marry him.—Yes, Oliver, coming," said Kitty.—"Oh! if I wasn't going *now*."

"But you'll come back?" said Costello, still holding her hand. "Promise, Kitty!"

"What on earth brought that young Moroney up here?" said Madge. "Kitty!"

Kitty was leaning now out of the moving train.

"But—I'll come back," she said, "and hunt here always."

"He appears to have had business here," remarked Oliver Deane drily.

"I'll come back" was swept away by the noise of the train. But Costello Moroney went away satisfied.

At Ballinmena life went still in a bustle of preparation. Was not the "Masther" leaving them, pouring out multitudinous directions, writing last thoughts down, rating Danny until that worthy herdsman declared he'd have to keep a glass handy to see which was his head and which his heels?

The dread epidemic had not come from the neighbouring farm. Andy's cows grazed without sign of illness. Honora received her share of directions with

the placidity of one who did not mean to remember any of them.

"Min folk," she declared contemptuously, "knows nothin' about dairies."

Anne Cafferty wept secretly in her kitchen; she had lost the zest of her cookery, and now a second parting was to wring her kindly old heart.

"Ye'd never know what thim coffins of ships'd meet," sniffed Anne drearily to Danny. "Icebergs, and collusions, and other ould ships travellin' dead undth'er the wather. I have seen it all on the papers."

Andy went across to see Mat. He found the young fellow sunken in bitter hopelessness.

The Counsellor had shown his worst side; he wanted Mat's farm for a cousin of his own and he was selling Mat up without mercy.

"I talked of the Sthates," said Mat, "but in me heart I never meant to quit the counthry, but to work up agin, if I was given the time."

"The Counsellor is an ill man to have dealings with," said Andy. He forbore to remind Mat of past warnings. "An' borrowed money is the lightest to go on earth," he added. "How much, Mat?"

"To pay all and re-stock properly would break into five hundred pounds," said Mat hopelessly. "There is interest on the bits I borried first and I bought a lot—a great lot, Mr. Andy, as ye know. The Counsellor was out to-day, well plazed with all I have done here with the drainage an' the improvements on the fincing. The sorra a many foxes ye'll have alive in Ballinmena onst Foxy Jim Dundon lights his fires within. He has no use for thim same, I tell ye."

There was no use in talking. It was the inevitable. Merely one young farmer who had gambled, trusting

to the elusive lady Luck, and who was to go under thoroughly. A steady, hard-working "bye" who had tried to get rich too soon. Had it not been for Creina, this Adam would have remained in his garden of Eden, grasping prosperity piece by piece, but for her sake he had tried, and failed, that was all—there was nothing more to be said or done.

Foxy Jim Dundon would take over the stout old thatched cottage, reap the benefit of young Mat O'Neill's work. This Jim Dundon was a man who owned many farms, and wanted one within easy reach of the town.

Andy's thin hand gripped the strong warm young one. He said good-bye, but his eyes were dim as he walked home, and to make them dimmer he saw Creina standing by the gate and the brown little head sink against the bars.

When she raised her face it was easy to see that she was weary from too many tears, that she had wept herself numb for the time.

"I come to say good-bye, Uncle Andy. I could not face over when ye go with all the people about. Ye were with Mat?"

For a moment a flash of hope lighted her eyes, then died as swiftly as it had been born. But old Andy saw it come and go.

"Sure, afther all, it is beyant all help," she said. "I will be up at Dromin agin ye come home, Uncle Andy. It is settled an' all."

Andy offered her sanctuary at Ballinmena, suggested going out as a maid. Creina shook her head.

"They would be at me," she said wearily. "Mamma an' all of them. As well Timsy as another, maybe; when the heart is broke in ye, what does it matter?"

I'll take it all aisier up there, now there isn't a bit of life in me."

Old Andy Quin stood still looking at her. Only pretty litt'e Creina Casey, whose beauty would soon fade and leave her a hard-faced woman of the people, old before her time. Only one girl's heart bruised and broken. She was made of finer clay than her fellows, she had power to suffer, but in two years or three, work would have stamped out memory. The apathetic fatalism of her race would be as a salve to her wounded spirit. She would say her prayers and be a dutiful wife to drunken Timsy, rear his children and see her money poured out until it was all gone, that was all it was to be. But the sun caught the gleam of Creina's hair; with her white face and tear-washed eyes she was so like the young Katey who had sobbed out good-bye to Andy so many years ago. Choking the sobs back, talking of coming back to him brave in health from the voyage.

One can be young only once. Katey was dead, and he was old—very old—yet he could carry out his plan—and this child—must see hers lie dead.

With age comes back the childish power of feeling disappointments; the building on our little schemes as children do.

Andy drew a long, sighing breath. He laid his hand on the child's roughened hair, then he called to Patsy and went into the house.

"Patsy is away to the post office with tallygrams," said Honora to Anne, ten minutes later, "an' a sight of silver to pay out. An' the masther has ordhered the thrap an' pony."

"He isn't goin' at all," breathed Anne wildly. "Patsy tould me. He has the queerest twisht on his

poor ould face that ye'd say was a smile an' he cryin' in his heart, an' he sent for Mat O'Neill in a hurry."

"God save us!" said Honora.

Old Andy had given up his trip. Given it up to lend the money saved for it to Mat. There was no word of the sacrifice when he made the arrangements, when he paid off the Counsellor and made Mat his creditor instead. With an alteration to his will leaving the amount to Creina. It was his savings and not due to his heir.

He had been prevented going at the last minute, he told people, that was all; and perhaps he found some repayment when he went out again, his telegrams written, to tell Creina to come with him to her mother to get consent to her marriage to Mat O'Neill.

It is only youth which can leap from its slough of despond straight to the hill of joy without a trace of the salt-tasting mire upon it.

There was some private whispering to Mrs. Casey, delivered sternly by Andy, and it was settled. Creina and Mat were promised.

Father Con came over a few days later to find old Andy leaning over his gate, watching the plough travel up and down the earth, breaking in red, even edges before the blade. Danny's voice rising and falling monotonous.

"Hup, let ye. Hup, Grampus. Hup, Playboy. Woa!—stheady. Wo—a—— Hup."

"Ye are not going for the thrip, Andy," burst out Father Con, "the thing yer heart was set on? I come the moment I heard."

"Oh! in a year or two maybe, in a year or two when I have settled up again. It will be the same then. Some day."

Andy's answer to everyone, but the flutter in his side told him the some day will never be.

Leaning on his gate, with no great change to dream of now, he looks across to the thatched cottage where Creina works contentedly and wonders if he is rewarded.

"Some day," old Andy tells you gently. The sea and the ships are always ready.

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WILLIAM BRENDON AND SON, LTD.
PLYMOUTH

